

**Testimony of Robert Sanders**

*In Support of HB 3197 – April 2, 2025*

Dear Co-Chairs Prozanski and Kropf, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Robert Sanders. I currently work in Youth Recovery Services.

I'm here to urge your full support of HB 3197—because this bill is more than funding. It's about building a system that meets youth with support instead of barriers. Right now, Oregon ranks among the worst in access to youth treatment. In many regions, there's nothing at all, especially for kids without private insurance.

But we *do* know what works: prevention, early intervention, recovery high schools, mentorship, and peer-based recovery. We know that Youth Peer Delivered Services offers refreshing hope, a place to belong and a place to dream while building the community that supports them in the belief of a limitless future. These services don't require insurance, which ensures equitable access to the continuum of care. The efficacy of these programs is demonstrated through the following rates: At 4D Recovery, they saw 96.77% of participants make progress on their self-determined goals. They saw 90.32% of participants engage in school. 83.87% of participants improve their family relationships and were able to retain 91.6% of their participants from one quarter to the next – as a result, their participants saw youth celebrate an average of over 145 days of sobriety.

But that's just one piece of the puzzle—and 38,000 youth across Oregon are still falling through the cracks. Without Youth having a designated space on various budget lines, I agree, they have often been rejected.

Some will say youth alcohol use is down, that's based on national averages. But Oregon ranks *second* in the nation for youth alcohol use. HB3197 is a chance to invest in hope. To build protective factors—like connection, purpose, and community—that reduces overdose, incarceration, and homelessness.

And I'd like to close with something personal.

During my adolescence, my grandmother, former Governor Barbara Roberts, often recited our state motto: "She flies with her own wings." She embodied that belief by fighting to expand education for youth with special needs and by protecting Oregon's forests from corporate exploitation. That same motto challenges us today—to chart our own course, guided by courage rather than convenience.

So, I ask you now: **What legacy will this committee leave?** Will you truly honor Oregon's motto by rising to defend our young people when they need you most? Or will this become just another missed moment like the last 50 years—where industry profits overshadow people?

HB 3197 is a chance to act with courage. Let it be known that when Oregon's youth needed champions, this committee chose to lead.

Thank you for your time—and for your vision.

**Robert M. Sanders**