



OREGON PSYCHIATRIC
PHYSICIANS ASSOCIATION

Date: April 3, 2024

To: The Honorable Chair Jason Kropf
The Honorable Vice-Chair Willy Chotzen
The Honorable Vice-Chair Kim Wallan
Members of the House Judiciary Committee

From: Bennett Garner MD, Vice Chair
Oregon Psychiatric Physicians Association

RE: HB 2467 Civil Commitment

Chair Kropf, Vice-Chairs Chotzen and Wallan and members of the committee:

My name is Dr. Bennett Garner. I'm a child and adolescent psychiatrist and Vice-chair of the Oregon Psychiatric Physicians Association Legislative Committee (OPPA). The Oregon Psychiatric Physicians Association (OPPA) is a branch of the American Psychiatric Association and represents psychiatrists throughout Oregon. We strongly support HB 2467 – Dash 3 Amendment, which makes critical improvements to Oregon's approach to treating individuals with severe mental illness who are dangerous to themselves or others or unable to meet their essential needs.

Under the current statute, we have seen too many individuals denied involuntary commitment, only to later die by suicide or seriously harm themselves or others. Some have suffered severe medical consequences, such as limb amputations, because intervention was delayed under existing legal interpretations. Additionally, current law does not adequately account for the deterioration in mental functioning that occurs when individuals with severe mental illness do not receive timely treatment.

HB 2467 – Dash 3 addresses these gaps by refining the criteria for involuntary commitment. One major improvement is making clear that the criteria require that dangerous behavior is reasonably foreseeable in the near future and that imminence is not required. This change ensures that individuals at serious risk receive intervention before tragedy occurs.

The bill also provides clearer definitions of harm to self or others and strengthens judicial guidance by specifying what courts "shall" and "may" consider. For example, courts may now evaluate recent property damage related to a mental health disorder if it endangered others or indicates future risk.

Crucially, the bill acknowledges anosognosia, a brain-based condition that affects approximately 50% of individuals with schizophrenia and many with severe bipolar disorder. Anosognosia impairs a person's ability to recognize that they have an illness, making them unlikely to seek or comply with treatment. By allowing courts to consider whether a person lacks insight into their illness and need for treatment, this bill takes an essential step toward ensuring appropriate care for those who cannot recognize their condition.

For these reasons, we strongly urge you to support HB 2467- Dash 3.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide our perspective on this bill.