



3 April 2025

Joint Committee on Addiction and Community Safety Response
Oregon Legislature

Co-Chairs Prozanski and Kropf, Co-Vice Chair Mannix, and Members of the Committee:

RE: House Bill 3197

My name is Jimmy Jones, and I serve as the Executive Director of the **Mid-Willamette Valley Community Action Agency (MWVCAA)** in Salem. We serve low-income residents across Marion, Polk, and nine additional counties in Oregon. Each year, we provide more than \$80 million in services and direct client assistance for housing, homelessness, energy and weatherization, and early learning programs to more than 60,000 Oregonians experiencing poverty. I also serve as the Vice President for Legislative Affairs at the Community Action Partnership of Oregon, sit on the Housing Committee of the Racial Justice Council, was a member of the House Bill 2100 Task Force on Homelessness and Racial Disparities, and most recently Chaired the Legislature's Joint Task Force on Hospital Discharge.

I am writing in support of House Bill 3197, which establishes a modest retail tax on beer, wine and cider and offers a long-overdue and meaningful investment in youth alcohol and drug prevention, treatment and recovery services. In Oregon, fewer than 1 in 10 youth who need substance use treatment actually receive it. Meanwhile, according to the 2022 Oregon Student Health Survey, 16.9% of 11th graders reporting alcohol use within the past 30 days, and 12.6% of 8th graders reported having their first drink (beyond just a few sips) by age 12 or younger.

House Bill 3197 addresses this crisis directly by introducing a phased retail tax on alcohol, beginning at just 2% in 2026 and increasing to 8% in 2032. These small contributions will fund life-saving services for youth and families across Oregon. This bill dedicates 85% of the revenues to the Youth Development Division Fund for evidence-based prevention programming, with the remaining 15% distributed to counties for local initiatives.

Children and youth affected by addiction face significantly greater risk of housing instability, foster care placement and criminal justice involvement. At MWVCAA, we operate two shelters for homeless and run-away youth, and we see everyday the devastating impact that untreated substance use has on children and families. Without accessible, age-appropriate services, these challenges only intensify.

Oregon ranks among the worst states in the nation for access to youth behavioral health and addiction treatment. House Bill 3197 reflects a smart, proactive approach, which is more cost-effective in the long run. The cost of untreated addiction in our state exceeds \$6 billion annually. For every \$1 spent in prevention we save \$18 in emergency and crisis services.

For all of these reasons, I urge your strong support for House Bill 3197, the earlier we intervene in the lives of young people, the more likely they are to thrive. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony and for your service to Oregon communities.

Respectfully,

Jimmy Jones
Executive Director