

April 6, 2025

Chairs Kropf and Prozanski, and members of the Joint Committee on Addictions and Community Safety Response:

I write to express my strong support for HB 2954 to fund Addiction Primary Prevention in every community in Oregon through local public health and tribes.

Oregon spends very little to prevent substance use

Alcohol, tobacco and illicit drugs kill more than 12,000 Oregonians each year, yet Oregon spends only 6% of its substance use budget on prevention, most of which is earmarked only for tobacco through Ballot Measure 108. The \$5 million per year that the federal government has historically provided for prevention is divided between 36 counties, nine tribes, and nine community organizations. In most counties, this is not enough to hire one full-time prevention specialist.

The substance use crisis takes an emotional toll on people who use drugs, their families and their loved ones. It takes a financial toll on all of us, with an estimated societal and economic cost of \$6 billion per year. We cannot afford to continue on this destructive path – we need a path paved with primary prevention.

Support HB 2954

That's why I'm asking you to support HB 2954, which will allocate \$25 million per biennium so all counties and tribes can hire at least one staff person dedicated to preventing drug and alcohol use.

The local public health workforce are experts at primary prevention, which has saved millions of lives when funded and prioritized. Think about how far we have come with anti-smoking, teen pregnancy and bike helmet campaigns and with laws requiring seat belts and car seats. Primary prevention saves lives and money!

What is primary prevention?

Primary prevention aims to prevent disease, injury and addiction from happening at all. It does this by helping youth build confidence, improve social skills, resist peer pressure, make better choices, and build a support structure around them so they have friends and trusted adults who know how to help.

The Healthy Schools program in Deschutes County trains teachers with evidence-based health curriculum, and in just three years is seeing positive outcomes. In Linn County, a public health prevention specialist teaches the LifeSkills Training program in elementary and middle schools. This program is held as a model nationwide, as it has shown large reductions in

substance use lasting up to 12 years, coupled with reductions in aggression and delinquency. Every child in Oregon deserves the opportunity to learn these powerful prevention skills.

I urge you to support and fund HB 2954 to provide primary prevention programs through local public health and tribes to every community in Oregon. The path to a healthy, productive, society starts with primary prevention. The time to invest in primary prevention is NOW.

Sincerely,



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