



April 9th, 2025

SB 881

Position: Opposition

Dear Chair Prozanski, Chair Kropf, and members of the Committee:

Unite Oregon is a statewide advocacy organization led by and for refugees, immigrants, Black, Indigenous, and other communities of color, rural populations, and those experiencing poverty. With over 5,000 members and base-building chapters in Multnomah County, Washington County, Clackamas County, and the Rogue Valley, we were founded on the principle of building a unified, intercultural movement for justice in Oregon that centers the rights and freedoms of the most marginalized in our communities. One of the multiple areas we advocate for justice is in the creation of community safety for all through the reduction in over-policing, mass incarceration, surveillance, and the over-representation of Black, Indigenous, and other communities of color in the criminal justice system and greater investments in life-affirming services, such as housing, healthcare, education, and community climate resilience.

We write in opposition to Senate Bill 881 because we believe this legislation backtracks our progress as a state in recognizing addiction as a public health crisis. By attempting to transfer oversight and responsibility of behavioral health funding to an agency primarily responsible for improving the state's criminal justice system, we risk doubling down on treating addiction as a criminal justice issue instead of addressing it as the public health crisis we know it to be.

Decisions about behavioral health funding should remain in the agency tasked with overseeing the state's health and behavioral health systems of care. While there is room for improvement and growth in the BHRN-grantmaking process, the subject matter expertise and lived experience provided by the Oversight and Accountability Council has facilitated critical investments into culturally and linguistically specific BHRN providers and have set up successful services to communities most impacted by War on Drug-era policies. The quantity of services that offer wraparound essentials for recovery and rehabilitation are slim in Oregon. We need to ensure the continuity and stability of those services, not cause further disruption and confusion.

Oregonians mandated that cities, counties, and the state view and treat addiction as a crisis of health, not criminality. Unite Oregon welcomes the conversation on how to improve and support entities like the Oversight and Accountability Council in being able to carry out their duties to

fund behavioural health services in a consistent, transparent, and effective manner. But we urge this committee to vote no on Senate Bill 881, which threatens to further silo the state's response to substance use disorder in a criminal justice framework.

Thank you for your time, dedication, and service in improving the wellbeing of our communities.

Sincerely,

Hannah Alzgal, Housing Justice and Community Safety Statewide Policy Coordinator
Unite Oregon