



Chairs Prozanski and Kropf, and members of the committee,

We are submitting this testimony on behalf of HJRA in opposition to SB 881.

SB 881 would abandon the goal we all share of treating addiction through a public health approach. SB 881 threatens to take us backward, back to a time when addiction was treated as a crime instead of the complex health issue that it is. We cannot allow that to happen again. We have seen, over and over, the devastating consequences of addressing substance use through a criminal justice framework. People suffer. Families are torn apart. Communities are left without the healing resources they desperately need.

I say this not just as an advocate of a health-based approach, but as someone who is in long-term recovery and works every day alongside people fighting for their lives and futures. Recovery is not born from punishment. It is nurtured through compassion, connection, and evidence-based care. That is the work of a health system, not a justice system.

The Criminal Justice Commission does valuable work in its arena. Still, it does not have the behavioral health expertise or provider relationships required to manage this funding in a way that truly centers healing. The Oregon Health Authority does. OHA knows how to support providers in delivering the evidence-based services that change lives.

When we shift this responsibility away from OHA, we send the message that addiction is still a moral failing, not a health issue. We retraumatize communities that have already carried the burden of stigma and criminalization for far too long.

We have an opportunity here to continue what we've started, to strengthen a public health approach, and to invest in systems that see people as human beings worthy of care and recovery. Let's not undo that progress. Let's not make the same mistake again. HJRA fully supports the proposed amendments to Senate Bill 610, and we strongly encourage you to maintain the current structure that places BHRN oversight within the Oregon Health Authority. Instead of shifting responsibility, we should strengthen OHA's ability to expand and improve the systems already delivering results.

Thank you for your time.