

April 11, 2025

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

As a resident of Oregon and a public health advocate, **I'm writing to voice my strong support for HB 2954, which would fund Addiction Primary Prevention efforts in every community across the state through our local public health departments and tribal governments.**

Despite the enormous toll that substance use takes on Oregon communities, our state invests very little in prevention. More than 12,000 Oregonians die each year from alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs, yet only 6% of Oregon's substance use budget is dedicated to prevention—and most of that is restricted to tobacco prevention through Ballot Measure 108. The \$5 million in annual federal funding that does exist is spread thin among 36 counties, nine tribes, and nine community organizations. **In many areas, it's not even enough to fund one full-time prevention specialist.**

The ongoing substance use crisis affects us all—emotionally, physically, and economically. It devastates families and communities, and costs Oregon an estimated \$6 billion annually. Continuing down this path is unsustainable. We need a better way forward—one that centers primary prevention.

That's why I urge your support for HB 2954. This bill would allocate \$25 million per biennium to ensure every county and tribe in Oregon has at least one staff member dedicated solely to preventing drug and alcohol use.

Primary prevention works—and our local public health workforce is uniquely positioned to deliver it. We've seen the lifesaving power of prevention in campaigns around tobacco use, teen pregnancy, bike helmets, seat belts, and more. These strategies not only reduce harm, but also save money and improve quality of life.

Primary prevention means stopping addiction before it starts. It's about equipping young people with the tools they need—confidence, healthy coping skills, strong relationships, and trusted adults who can support them. Programs like the Healthy Schools initiative in Deschutes County and the LifeSkills Training program in Linn County are already making an impact. **The results speak for themselves: reduced substance use, improved behavior, and healthier communities. Every child in Oregon deserves access to this kind of support.**

Please support and fund HB 2954. A healthier, more resilient Oregon begins with primary prevention—and the time to invest is now.

Sincerely,

Madison Riethman, MPH, CPH
Portland, Oregon