



To: Co-Chairs Senator Prozanski and Representative Kropf and Members of the Oregon Legislative Assembly Joint Committee on Addiction and Community Safety Response

April 10<sup>th</sup>, 2025

I am writing on behalf of Washington County Health and Human Services (HHS) to share our support for [House Bill 2954](#), which would provide \$25 million for substance use primary prevention programs for Oregon's federally-recognized Tribes and local public health authorities (LPHAs).

Substance misuse and addiction are widespread in Oregon. About [22%](#) of Oregonians aged 12 and older report symptoms of substance use disorder (SUD) placing Oregon in the top 5 states with the highest rates of SUD. Oregon also has the 4<sup>th</sup> highest rate of youth substance use with about [12.5%](#) of people aged 12-17 reporting symptoms of SUD. Across all types of substances, rates of use and the associated [poor health outcomes](#) tend to be higher for [Black/African American](#), [Indigenous](#), [LGBTQIA+](#), and [lower income](#) populations.

Chances are, you know someone who uses a substance in a way that negatively impacts their life. SUD influences every part of a person's life and can lead to poor health outcomes and bring harm to the people around them. Many forms of substance misuse are [connected](#) to [higher](#) risk of injury, violence, risky sexual behavior, miscarriage, developing chronic diseases like heart or liver disease, and contracting infectious diseases like HIV or hepatitis, and poor mental health outcomes. And the most severe consequence of substance misuse is becoming far too common; between 2021 and 2022, opioid overdose deaths [rose](#) by 30% in the tri-county region, and fentanyl overdose deaths rose by 66%.

Yet in the 2021-2023 biennium only about [6%](#) of statewide SUD spending was dedicated to helping people avoid initiating substance misuse through primary prevention. These "upstream" solutions mitigate harms and increase protective factors in communities need to avoid later having a SUD or overdose. Meaningfully addressing substance misuse in Oregon means investing in every level of the care continuum, including prevention. In April 2024, the OHA published the results of a statewide SUD financial [analysis](#), which estimated \$128M is needed to close the gap in primary prevention supports and services. This investment would help lessen the need for and strain on other parts of the system focused on harm reduction, treatment, and recovery.

Local and tribal public health are uniquely positioned in local communities to lead this work. Washington County Health and Human Services has strong relationships with prevention partners, expertise in convening and coordinating community partners (e.g., schools, behavioral health providers), and attuned to the local need for prevention services to address health priorities.

Please help us close this gap and ensure that everyone in Oregon has access to evidence-based primary prevention for substance misuse by supporting HB 2954.

Sincerely,

Mjere Simantel  
Washington County Director of Health and Human Services