



**TESTIMONY ON HB 2470**  
**JOINT COMMITTEE ON ADDICTION AND COMMUNITY SAFETY RESPONSE**  
**APRIL 23, 2025**

Co-Chair Prozanski, Co-Chair Kropf, Co-Vice Chairs Mannix, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Mae Lee Browning, Legislative Director of the Oregon Criminal Defense Lawyers Association.<sup>i</sup> **OCDLA opposes HB 2470.**

Jails are unsafe for people experiencing mental illness. The private healthcare companies contracted to provide medical services in jails have been shown time and time again to be inadequate and untrustworthy to assist adults in custody with mental illness. Adults in custody who have been found unfit to proceed and who require a hospital level of care have extremely high support needs to help them recover, and to maintain their own safety and that of those around them. They may not be in a headspace to identify when they are feeling unsafe or whether they are having a medical crisis. Jails have no training to support people in mental health crisis. In fact, the training at jails for behavior management is contradictory to the training that would be given to a person managing a mental health crisis. Behavior management in jail involves negative re-enforcement - escalating use of force for non-compliance, and solitary confinement as punishment. These tactics escalate existing mental health symptoms and lead to long term trauma. As the many articles submitted from OCDLA show, they can also lead to death.

Several conversations are happening at once regarding mental illness this legislative session. A common theme appears to be compassion for those suffering in a system inadequate to meet their needs, and an acknowledgment that incarceration cannot be an answer to the problem of under-resourcing. This bill goes in the opposite direction and simply embraces that jails are the new mental health treatment facilities. We can do better.

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<sup>i</sup> OCDLA's 1,200 members statewide include public defense providers, private bar attorneys, investigators, experts, and law students. Our attorneys represent Oregon's children and parents in juvenile dependency proceedings, youth in juvenile delinquency proceedings, adults in criminal proceedings at the trial and the appellate level, as well as civil commitment proceedings throughout the state of Oregon. Our mission is championing justice, promoting individual rights, and supporting the legal defense community through education and advocacy.