

April 29, 2025

Dear Representative Hartman and Members of the Committee:

My name is Kelly McCauley. My pronouns are they/them. I am the chair of the Oregon Council on Developmental Disabilities and the chair of the Self Protection and Rights Advocacy Council. I also do webinars for OHSU for DSPS and other care professionals. They get credit for the course. I talk about my experience of mental health and talk about how important it is to have a counsellor and other mental health care. As a result of my training, a counselor requested a list to get more people signed up for counselling and some resources. This shows how much of a difference it can make to staff and to people with mental health challenges for everyone to have training.

It is important to be able to trust and talk to a counsellor or receive mental health services. Talking to someone even if it is scary and hard is important to avoid getting hurt more. In the past, before I moved to this group home, I had to rely on the crisis line for help. It didn't really give me the support I needed. A lot of the phone calls I made were not that helpful. Or they would tell me to go to the emergency room. Sometimes I would wake at 4am and not be able to get back to sleep. There was a time when a bunch of counsellors were let go from Benton County and I had to rely on my staff. The staff were not trained in mental health, and it wasn't helpful. I needed much more help.

Right now, I live in a group home and my staff are trained in mental health. I feel like I have my life back from living here. If I need help in the middle of the night, the staff are right across the hall. I trust them enough that I can tell them anything. I can see that they are trained by the way they handle issues and conflicts that come up. I have my head caregiver come to appointments. This makes me feel more comfortable and I feel supported. It makes things easier.

Mental health is something I am very passionate about. More mental health supports are needed. This is needed for everyone, not just people with disabilities. Please support Senate Bill 729. Thank you for listening.