

## Testimony of Aaron Zybach, DISP Graduate in 2007 In Support of Senate Bill 69

My name is Aaron Zybach. My sobriety date is January 24, 2007. Prior to entering into DISP in 2007, I had been in and out of the criminal justice system for most of my adult life, starting with my first DUII in 1990 and ending with my third DUII on January 5, 2007. My arrest record nears 20, I have several misdemeanor convictions, and I am also a convicted felon. I can truthfully say that all of my time spent in the system is a direct result of my drug and alcohol dependence/abuse. I would like to touch on a couple of points as to how the DISP program helped to save my life and in my opinion, contributed greatly to the safety and welfare of the community.

By giving me 48 hours in jail instead of the 90 days I was looking at for my last DUII conviction, I was able to keep my job, actively participate in treatment, be a parent, and become an active member in the program of Alcoholics Anonymous which I can proudly say I am still a member of today. I can state with all honesty that if I had been given the 90 days in jail, I probably would have never pleaded into DISP. There would have been no real incentive for me. I can say this because my wife, Megan, unexpectedly died on February 23, 2007, shortly after my DUII, and shortly before I signed up for DISP. I was truly devastated by her loss and I was at a crossroads in my life. If I was to take 90 days in jail, I would have lost my job, my house; my Son would have no longer been able to live with me, and that I believe would have broken me. I would have come out of jail after three months with nothing to return to except loss, and I know without a doubt, I would have returned to a life of alcohol and drug abuse. What DISP provided me with was some breathing room and some structure that I desperately needed at that point in my life. During my first 90 days in DISP, I planted myself firmly in treatment; I found a home in Alcoholics Anonymous, I did my best I could as a single parent, kept my job while working every day that I possibly could, and I started a foundation for a better life. Though many probably didn't believe that I deserved the "last chance" that DISP gave to me, I am forever grateful for the opportunity that they presented to me, and I believe that they are too.

In my twenty plus years of alcohol and drug abuse, I now know that I was a danger to myself, my family, and my community. I was at times a violent offender and I was a chronic drunk driver. There was rarely a time when I was driving a vehicle that I wasn't impaired in one form or another. It is just by mere chance that I never seriously injured or killed someone. What DISP provided me with was an extremely structured program unlike any other I had been through in my life. They held me accountable for my actions, but also pointed me in all the right directions for me to make necessary changes. I felt early on in the program that the Judges and case managers really cared about the program and the people in it. In DISP, they didn't just talk about rehabilitation, they insisted upon it. What I learned in DISP, treatment, and the program of Alcoholics Anonymous, is that I can't change the past, but I don't have to keep reliving it.

Today I am a respected family member, a valued employee, a tax payer and a home owner. I have a valid Oregon Driver's License and have had no negative contact with the criminal justice system since I graduated from DISP in 2009. I have not had a drink or a drug since January 24, 2007. I recently became engaged and am planning to get married in the summer of 2014. In my spare time, I sponsor people through Alcoholics Anonymous, take meetings into treatment centers, and have been asked to, and have shared my story of recovery in several cities in Oregon, Washington, and California. DISP helped to save my life, and by doing so, possibly saved many others. And I am only one story.

Aaron Zybach

February 12, 2013