



CITY OF  
**PORTLAND, OREGON**

**Charlie Hales, Mayor**  
Amanda Fritz, Commissioner  
Nick Fish, Commissioner  
Dan Saltzman, Commissioner  
Steve Novick, Commissioner

April 9, 2013

Senator Laurie Monnes Anderson, Chair  
Senate Health Care and Human Services Committee  
900 Court St. NE, Hearing Room A  
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Chair Monnes Anderson and Members of the Committee:

We write today to express our strong support for state investments in mental health programs that meet the needs of all Oregonians.

An underfunded and fractured state system for providing mental health services directly impacts the City of Portland through increased demand for emergency and police services. Not only does sheer call volume increase when services are underfunded, but quality of life suffers for those who need mental health care. Communities feel the impact of an underfunded mental health care system with both greater demands on first responders and an increased presence of substance abuse and crime.

When mental health care needs are neglected, there is a direct cost to our economy as health problems turn into crises and the need for help escalates. At the same time, even people who are able to seek mental health services are often unable to access treatment in a timely manner because of a shortage of mental health providers in the state.

As a result of these challenges, our first responders have become de facto social service providers for citizens experiencing mental health crisis or those suffering from illness without sufficient treatment. First responders are the most expensive and oftentimes the least equipped to provide mental health care in our community.

SB 823 calls for investments in new and existing programs designed to meet the behavioral needs of all Oregonians. To that end, the City of Portland encourages investments in 24 hour drop off facilities for people in mental health crisis, programs like Lines for Life, and other programs designed to encourage the availability of more mental health providers in Oregon.

We thank the committee for hearing this important legislation and urge a favorable vote.

Charlie Hales  
Mayor

Amanda Fritz  
Commissioner

Nick Fish  
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Steve Novick  
Commissioner