

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 4094
Submitted to the House Judiciary Committee
By Shannon Wight, Deputy Director, Partnership for Safety and Justice
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Chair Barker, Vice-Chair Barton, Vice-Chair Krieger, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Shannon Wight and I am the Deputy Director at Partnership for Safety and Justice. Partnership of Safety and Justice is a statewide, non-profit membership organization that has worked in Oregon for 15 years. We are a unique organization in that we advocate for policies that benefit both people convicted of crime and victims of crime. We believe we can and should have a public safety system that ensures the people most impacted by crime and violence have opportunities to rebuild their lives.

I submit this testimony on behalf of Partnership for Safety and Justice in support of HB 4094, which would open an avenue for underage drinkers to seek official help and medical aid for themselves or a friend for alcohol treatment. Alcohol poisoning issues have the potential to end a person's life; in fact, alcohol poisoning leads to the deaths of 5,000 underage drinkers every year in America.

HB 4094 is a smart first step in addressing what is not only an important public safety issue, but a public health issue as well. The sooner someone can be treated for alcohol poisoning, the greater the likelihood that person will survive. A person probably would not think twice about calling 911 when witnessing someone having a heart attack. Yet a survey by North Dakota State University found that fear of legal issues was among the top reasons students did not seek medical aid for people suffering from alcohol poisoning. North Dakota saw the problem with this situation and passed a bill similar to HB 4094, as have 16 other states and the District of Columbia.

Our neighbor to the north, Washington State, passed a similar law in 2010. A study by the Alcohol and Drug Institute out of University of Washington found that the after the law, the vast majority of users were aware of the limited immunity the law created and would be more likely to call 911 as a result. A report by Wisconsin State Council on Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse found that 911 was not called 50% of the time during a drug overdose and the primary reason was for fear of prosecution. In Washington, that study noted the lack of prosecution in these cases generally, with the primary intent of the bill being to save lives. Finally, in the *Oregonian's* recent editorial in support of the bill, they noted that amnesty given to Cornell University students during alcohol poisoning incidents created an increase the number of calls for overdose assistance.

HB 4094 is an important first step that can save lives and give young people with alcohol issues another chance. We believe that this public health approach to a public safety challenge is the right one and ask for your support of HB 4094.