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Chair Prozanski, Vice-chair Close and members of the committee,

For the record my name is Thomas Letchworth, and I am the Student Body President at Southern Oregon University and serve on the board of directors for the Oregon Student Association. I am here today to testify in favor of HB 4094, the medical amnesty bill.

I cannot stress enough just how important it is that we change the system so as to avoid punishing individuals when they try to do the right thing by calling emergency personnel in an emergency situation. Empowering people to seek medical assistance for individuals in distress without the fear of legal retribution because they themselves may be intoxicated, is something that should have been done a long time ago. It needs to get done, because it will absolutely save lives.

My freshman year of college my roommate, one of his friends and I all went to a Halloween party. I'm sure this body is aware that drinking excessively on Halloween is a favorite past time of young adults. On this particular Halloween, one of the young adults who chose to excessively drink just happened to be my roommate's friend. For the sake of this testimony I'll call him John, because I know he'd rather I not publicly mention his real name.

We had not had a chance to eat dinner because we were too busy trying to get our costumes together at the last minute. As such, we all had empty stomachs when we arrived at the party. Within the span of about an hour and a half, John had consumed the better part of a fifth of vodka. Soon after he was in such a state that he could no longer stand up, speak or even remain coherent for more than a few seconds. However, he was not throwing up. We began to worry that he might have alcohol poisoning, but weren't sure exactly what to do. We were underage at the time, and were concerned about getting MIPs on our records. We weren't sure if we would be held liable, or punished by the law in some other way after calling the authorities. We didn't want him to wake up the next day with a large bill from the ambulance in addition to a furnishing charge from the police. As such, even though



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we were pretty sure that he was in the process of getting alcohol poisoning, we refrained from calling an ambulance. Instead I called my girlfriend at the time, who was training to become an EMT.

She told let me know that so long as he threw up soon, he should be fine and that if he wasn't throwing up, then we should burn some toast and force him to eat some because it functions like a natural ipecac. Luckily right then he began to throw up. Eventually we were able to get John home safely and he ended up being fine. However, he very well could have died that night.

Never again should anyone in this state have to make the choice that I had to make that night. The choice between gambling with one's career, one's schooling and future, or gambling with someone's life. People should not be afraid to do the right thing; they should not be punished for being good Samaritans. If someone has to call an ambulance for their friend or acquaintance because of some kind of substance overdose, they shouldn't be punished for it. Seeing a friend get carted away in an ambulance is punishment enough.

Thomas Letchworth
President, Associated Students of Southern Oregon University
Board of Directors, Oregon Student Association