



CITY OF
PORTLAND, OREGON

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

March 25, 2015

Senator Alan Bates, Co-Chair
Representative Nancy Nathanson, Co-Chair
Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Human Services
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court St. NE, Hearing Room F
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Co-Chairs and Members of the Committee:

We write today to express our strong support for state funding for facilities where people experiencing mental health crises can receive acute care, as well as increased investments in community-based mental healthcare services.

Nationally, the mental health care system is failing to meet the needs of patients and communities, and Oregon is no exception. A fragmented and underfunded mental health care system has resulted in local fire departments and law enforcement becoming the de facto social service providers to citizens experiencing mental health crisis, or suffering from illness without sufficient treatment. An underfunded state system for providing mental health services directly impacts the City of Portland through increased demand for emergency and police services.

The United States Department of Justice indicated in our settlement agreement that they "expect the City's partners to help remedy the lack of community-based addiction and mental health services to Medicaid clients and uninsured area residents." In addition, the settlement agreement elaborates that "the United States expects that local CCOs will establish, by mid-2013, one or more drop-off center(s) for first responders and public walk-in centers for individuals with addictions and/or behavioral health service needs."

There is an urgent need to develop an integrated system of care for people with mental illness. The availability of acute psychiatric care services coordinated with a fully funded community mental health care system is an important step in the right direction.

Sincerely,

Charlie Hales
Mayor

Dan Saltzman
Commissioner

Amanda Fritz
Commissioner

Steve Novick
Commissioner

Nick Fish
Commissioner