



2500 NE Neff Road
Bend, Oregon 97701
541.382.4321
www.stcharleshealthcare.org

March 30, 2015

Chair Greenlick and Members of House Healthcare
Oregon Legislature

RE: HB 3347

Chair Greenlick and Members of the Committee:

As Chief Behavioral Health Officer for St Charles Health System, I see first hand the challenges hospitals and health systems have every day dealing with people suffering with mental health conditions. Sometimes, people in need present with conditions not currently covered under our statutes, making it challenging at best to provide care for them when they are unable or unwilling to care for themselves. HB 3347 is one way to address this problem.

We see individuals in our community suffering from Traumatic Brain Injuries, illnesses, and other conditions that are often the result of years of abusing alcohol and other drugs. They are “gravely disabled”, and the system has no way to provide care for them when they are unable or unwilling to care for themselves. The current definition for a “person with mental illness” doesn’t include these conditions, and without a guardianship in place, these individuals are released without care, returning to our hospitals and emergency rooms when they harm themselves or others. For many of these individuals, the cycle continues until they die or get arrested for some petty criminal offense—or worse. It is heart breaking to watch.

HB 3347 addresses this issue by defining “gravely disabled” in statute, and allowing hospitals to hold these individuals and engage them in care, or at the very least, keep them safe while a plan of care can be developed. This reduces the likelihood of serious physical harm to themselves or others, and allows providers to engage social support systems, family and other services to keep the individual safe and re-engage in the communities they live in.

We ask your support for HB 3347. I know there are concerns that these individuals will utilize already scarce acute care resources—but the reality is, they already are. We just can’t care for them the way we need to, and HB 3347 gives us the ability to do so.

Please support HB 3347, and continue our legacy of caring for our most vulnerable citizens with compassion.

Robin Henderson, PsyD
Chief Behavioral Health Officer & Vice President, Strategic Integration