

Testimony Before the

Oregon House Rules Committee

HB 2936

April 20, 2015

By

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House Leader Val Hoyle and Committee Members,

My name is Stan Gilbert and I am the Community Mental Health Director for Klamath County, as well as the CEO of Klamath Basin Behavioral Health in Klamath Falls. We are a Private Non-Profit that contracts with OHA as the Community Mental Health Program for Klamath County. I am writing to you today, in strong support of HB 2936.

Klamath County, like many rural communities in Oregon, struggles with a myriad of issues in the service of its population. Like other rural communities, we face significant challenges in our local economy, our education system and in our social services. Klamath County has the dubious distinction of ranking highest in the State for Child Abuse and Addiction rates. In a recent study conducted by the Robert Wood Foundation published this year (www.countyhealthrankings.org/oregon), Klamath County is ranked last in the state for health outcomes. About a year ago, local community leaders got together to form a partnership called Klamath Works in an effort to resolve some of these issues. Also like many other of Oregon's rural counties, we are facing significant financial challenges due to the loss of timber revenues, water issues, and other natural resource economic challenges. Klamath is one of those counties that may be facing closure of our jail in the next budget cycle.

Our behavioral health program in partnership with Klamath Works, Klamath Falls Police, Klamath County Sheriff, Sky Lakes Medical Center, local Treatment providers, our Coordinated Care Organization and other community partners, have committed funding and developed a plan to build a Sobering Facility that would ease constraints across our entire system and provide a significant outreach opportunity for individuals who would normally not seek addiction treatment services. This is a project that as a community we have been working on for several years. Our need for a Sobering Facility has become so acute that local partners are contributing their own financial resources to make this Sobering Facility a reality. Land has been purchased, the facility has been designed, and we hope to be starting construction within this calendar year. Data from our community partners shows that we could divert approximately 15 to 20 individuals from the jail and/or ER on a weekly basis.

A local Sobering Facility would significantly decompress our local ER usage, and result in significant savings. A typical stay in the ER for intoxication is 10 to 14 hours long, and has an average cost of \$8,000 to \$12,000 dollars per event, so development of this facility can save \$80,000 to \$150,000 per week in unnecessary health care costs alone. There are several cases where we have documented ER usage up to 4 times in one month by a single person. Deferring these individuals to a Sobering Facility frees up those ER resources for true medical emergencies, and provides those individuals with a safe place for recovery, linkage to recovery services, and allows them access to immediate care and continued treatment.

The plan for Klamath County's Sobering Facility includes a robust screening process, which ensures the best possible clinical decision on placement (i.e. either to the Jail, ER or Sobering Facility), meals, access to Mental Health Services, referral to Detox or Addiction Treatment services and access to other social service agencies.

Your support for this bill will allow communities, like Klamath County, to increase their continuum of care for Oregonians struggling with addiction. Early identification and individualized one-on-one contact with wraparound services will encourage substance abusers to seek treatment. It also takes our conversation regarding addiction out of the criminal and legal system and moves it into the realm of the physical, emotional and behavioral well being of the individual. Instead of making this a conversation about crime and punishment, jail beds and strained law enforcement staffing levels, it becomes a conversation about health and well being. With HB 2936 we have the opportunity to set up a line of defense in addiction treatment. A local Sobering Facility allows immediate access to care that these individuals do not typically receive until, in many cases, it is medically and legally too late.

There have been some concerns voiced about the potential violation of an individual's Civil or Constitutional Rights. We believe these concerns are easily addressed through the development of program policies and procedures, and by existing statutes and rules that all health care operations are subject to. These issues are present in every facet of our Substance Use Disorder system, including in those other facilities currently defined by Statute. Defining the Sobering Facility as HB 2936 does, brings the service out of the shadows and into the open where abuses are more likely to be noticed and addressed. It teams up law enforcement, medical providers, A&D treatment providers, mental health providers and our Representatives to solve our mutual public health and safety issue. Finally it offers the opportunity to provide better, lower cost care to our citizens with improved access to treatment and a greater likelihood of positive outcomes.

We need this bill, and I urge the committee to move it forward.