

Dear Co-chairs Steiner Hayward and Rayfield and members of the committee,

Thank you, for the opportunity to provide testimony on the budget for Oregon Health Authority's Health Systems Division. My name is Corina Daugherty Calhoun, I have many roles in the social services field and today I am representing as a volunteer of SASS – the Solidarity Alliance of Social Services, an industry-wide coalition for direct service providers advocating for raised standards of service delivery for those we serve and improved working conditions for ourselves.

I am a current Master's of Social work student at Portland State University and will graduate in June. I am an intern with the Clackamas County Early Assessment Support Alliance (EASA) housed with Lifeworks NW where I am a direct service provider. EASA is an early intervention program for transition-age youth experiencing their first episode of psychosis. I also work at as a direct service provider at Cascadia Behavioral Healthcare in a long-term supported housing site, which houses adults diagnosed with severe and persistent mental illness and chronic homelessness.

Through my 8 years, working in the social service field, I have seen an increase in the amount of individuals who have access to mental health services after the Medicaid expansion and through mental health parity laws. Individuals who never received services before now have access to mental health counseling, addiction services, housing, and many other vital tools including medication, group counseling, peer services, and access to interdisciplinary teams. I have met individuals who were not able to afford insurance coverage at all before the expansion, and also those who were not able to afford their large deductible and co-pays, restricting their access to services.

With this increase has also come a reduction in the stigma associated with receiving mental health services. More individuals utilizing these services is helping others see that there should be no shame associated with asking for the help they or their loved one's need.

It is not an exaggeration to say that a cut to the budget could be a matter of life and death for some individuals who now have access to the services they need. According to the Oregon Public Health Division, the suicide rate in Oregon is 42% higher than the national average, which the CDC estimates is the second highest in the country. The rates of intentional and unintentional overdoses due to drug use has increased in Oregon in the last several years. The importance of not only

access to mental health and addiction services but access to services appropriate to the individual is vitally important to the health of our state.

Although many people that did not previously have access to the treatment they need, members of the community are still struggling economically to make ends meet and any increase in their out-of-pocket costs for these services could impact their ability to provide for themselves and their families. Please ensure that this access to appropriate mental health and addiction services for members of our community is maintained and cuts aren't made to the Oregon Health Authority's Health Systems Division. While I know that your job in this committee is to look at the budget, I know that raising the state's revenue is a vital component in maintaining these and other crucial services.

Sources:

<http://www.nationalreview.com/corner/417946/oregon-has-second-highest-rate-suicide-wesley-j-smith>

<http://public.health.oregon.gov/DiseasesConditions/InjuryFatalityData/Documents/NVDRS/Suicide%20in%20Oregon%202015%20report.pdf>

<https://public.health.oregon.gov/DiseasesConditions/InjuryFatalityData/Documents/oregon-drug-overdose-report.pdf>