



Chair Lively, Vice Chairs Wilson and Fahey, and Committee Members:

Oregon Recovers wishes to draw your attention to several aspects of Executive Director Marks testimony today which are of concern. Specifically we are concerned that OLCC's lack of consultation with public health officials has led to the implementation of policies that prioritize profit margins over the health and wellbeing of Oregon's families.

It's important to understand that, at the outset of the current pandemic, the [World Health Organization issued the following warnings](#):

- "alcohol compromises the body's immune system and increases the risk of adverse health outcomes. Therefore, people should minimize their alcohol consumption at any time, and particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic."
- "Existing rules and regulations to protect health and reduce harm caused by alcohol, such as restricting access, should be upheld and even reinforced during the COVID-19 pandemic and emergency situations; while any relaxation of regulations or their enforcement should be avoided."
- "This needs to be complemented by communicating with the public about the risks of alcohol consumption"

Unfortunately, the OLCC has acted in defiance of these recommendations and intentionally increased access to alcohol. By temporarily expanding home delivery of beer, wine and cider until to 2:30 am, allowing the sale of alcohol starting at 6:30 am and (without legislative approval) enabling alcohol companies to deliver to any door step in Oregon they have imperiled the Governor's efforts to reduce infections and posed an unnecessary threat to the 19% of Oreognians who struggle with substances. And now, according to Mr. Marks' testimony, the OLCC is "working with partner stakeholders through rulemaking to sensibly extend permanent rules."

There is nothing sensible about these actions and they were taken without consulting any public health officials. Furthermore, extending them beyond September is not in the public interest.

We urge members of this committee to pose the following questions to Mr. Marks:

1. Why has OLCC not consulted with the OHA staff prior to increasing access to alcohol in defiance of WHO recommendations?
2. Why is OLCC proposing to make these temporary rules permanent despite the public health consequences?



3. What steps has OLCC taken to educate the public about the dangers of consuming alcohol during a pandemic? If none, why not?
4. Does the OLCC staff plan to propose or support legislation that will allow home delivery of mixed cocktails? If so, what are the public health consequences of doing so?

Oregon is in the midst of one of the worst addiction crises in the nation and alcohol is the single largest contributor to this crisis. Five Oregonians die each day due to alcohol and it is a leading contributor to domestic violence, foster care and homelessness. The Coronavirus pandemic and the looming recession risk decimating an already hollowed out behavioral health system and experts in addiction treatment and public health are ringing the alarm bells about anticipated spikes in high-risk drinking and relapses. The primary mission of the OLCC--or any government agency--should be to protect and promote the wellbeing of all Oregonians. OLCC efforts to extend temporary rules to increase access to alcohol in defiance of public health guidelines is wrong and should be stopped.

Sincerely,

Andrew Swanson
Policy and Advocacy Director