

Date: March 5, 2019

To: The Honorable Sara Gelser, Chair
The Honorable Dallas Heard, Vice-Chair
Members of the Senate Human Services Committee

From: David Westbrook, COO
Lines for Life

RE: Position statement on SB 707 Youth Suicide Prevention Advisory Committee

Honorable Sara Gelser, Chair, Honorable Dallas Heard, Vice-Chair, Members of the Senate Human Services Committee:

I am writing on behalf of Lines for Life in support of SB 707. Lines for Life is a nonprofit where the mission is preventing substance and suicide and promoting mental wellness. Nineteen years ago we established Oregon's only statewide peer-to-peer line for teens, YouthLine. We are also the Oregon affiliate of the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline where 20% of the callers are youth under the age of 24. From this vantage point, we know that Oregon's young people are struggling with suicide, attempting suicide and all too often dying by suicide.

One of the key outcomes of the development of the 2016 – 2020 Youth Suicide Intervention and Prevention Plan was the establishment of the Oregon Alliance to Prevent Youth Suicide (YSIPP). The Alliance currently has 55 members appointed by the Oregon Health Authority who meet quarterly, and serve on committees that meet monthly. The Alliance has the responsibility of advising OHA on public policy matters, as well as coordinating and monitoring the implementation of the YSIPP. These members represent experts and stakeholders in preventing youth suicide. This nascent group has already shown great promise in furthering youth suicide prevention in Oregon. We believe that it is of vital importance to stemming the tragic tide of youth suicide. A problem that is the second leading cause of death for our young people 15 – 24 years of age.

Lines for Life currently holds the Chair of the Alliance and has staff serving on additional committees. We contribute numerous hours of staff time and Lines for Life resources to the Alliance because we believe in this model of collective impact for preventing youth from dying by suicide. We have every intention of continuing to support the Alliance in every way possible.

We would like to see SB 707 amended to allow for at least the current number of members. We believe that being inclusive of many voices is the best way to have the impact we all desire. Our hope is that you will stand with those of us dedicated to suicide prevention with your support on SB 707.