



To: Senate Committee on Mental Health
From: Oregon Alliance
Re: SB1553
Date: February, 5 2020

Dear Chair Roblan and Member of the Senate Committee on Mental Health

I am writing on behalf of Oregon Alliance members to support SB 1553, requiring the Oregon Health Authority, in collaboration with stakeholder groups, to identify, assess and prepare a report on regulatory and policy barriers to provide services more effectively and timely to individuals who are diagnosed with a co-occurring disorder.

Those with co-occurring disorders face complex challenges. They have increased rates of relapse, hospitalization, homelessness, and HIV and hepatitis C infection compared to those with either mental or substance use disorders alone.

SB1553 addresses improving access and removing barriers when providing services and growing capacity for co-occurring disorders or dual-diagnosis. Currently, existing barriers include:

- Barriers in rule - some co-occurring disorder requirements involve an actual physical barrier, with treatment needing to be in separate buildings when managing each disorder.
- Licensing challenges to provide services to co-occurring disorders.
- Facility licensure.
- Reimbursement for services does not cover the cost of providing co-occurring treatment.

SB1553 requires the Oregon Health Authority to provide information and recommendations to the legislature on how best to reduce these barriers and the cost to develop a rate for providers who treat people with co-occurring disorders.

We know this committee, House Committee on Behavioral Health, and Governor's Advisory Council are going to make significant decisions about the vision for Behavioral Health in 2021. SB1553 will provide additional information to support this work by gathering valuable information.

The Alliance urges you to support SB1553 and thanks you for your thoughtful consideration.

Sincerely,

Royce Bowlin
Executive Director