

Chair Sanchez, Vice-Chair Moore-Green, Vice-Chair Nosse, and members of the committee. My name is Alexia DeLeon and I am a professor of Professional Mental Health Counseling-Addictions Specialization at Lewis & Clark College. I am here to testify in support of HB 2949 and the -5, -7, -8 amendments.

I am a counselor educator and the Program Director for the PMHCA (Professional Mental Health-Addictions Specialization) program at Lewis & Clark College. I teach, advise, mentor and supervise many students who have entered the counseling profession with a past history of addiction. I, too am in recovery and believe in second chances for others in recovery, more specifically for BIPOC individuals like myself who enter the profession and attain higher education for the sole purpose of wanting to give back to their communities. Many of my students (past and current) have been incarcerated due to their journey with addiction across their lifespan before entering this field. Many of them are also first generation college students who are working very hard to attain their degrees only to be able to give back to their own communities because they have not had access to culturally responsive treatment themselves.

As a Latina (Mexican American) myself, I have seen the devastation addiction has caused in my own community. Even more saddening is the lack of bicultural and bilingual services available for Latinx communities in the many states I have resided in and provided treatment services in, including Oregon. I have had the opportunity to supervise Latinx clinicians in Oregon and have seen this impact on my community in a profound way. I have witnessed Latinx communities crying in gratitude because they finally have access to culturally responsive treatment. I support HB 2949 for this reason and more.

As previously mentioned, many of my past and current students are seeking their masters in counseling in order to be able to give back to their communities, specifically BIPOC communities. They too know the devastation addiction has caused in their own communities as many of them are also in recovery. Their *testimonios* are powerful and I truly believe they could benefit from HB2949 to help support their goals of giving back to these severely underserved communities. If the licensure process is modified to be less intimidating for people who have previously been incarcerated it will help create a pipeline for more students in recovery, including BIPOC masters level students in recovery, who enter the profession to attain their degrees and licensure.

In helping to pass measure 110 in Oregon, it only makes sense that I would also support HB2949 for similar reasons. I await the days in which addiction and those impacted by it will no longer have such steep barriers to fight in their journey toward recovery. In my personal and professional experiences of providing services to communities of color impacted by addiction I continue to see a lack of culturally responsive treatment because of these barriers. Helping more BIPOC people attain their masters in counseling, as well as licensure, will impact these underserved communities in a profound way.