

Dear Chair Prozanski and members of the Senate Committee On Judiciary and Ballot Measure 110 Implementation

My name is Steven Barnes, a retired mental health worker. I reside in Cottage Grove, OR, 97424. I worked at South Lane Mental Health for 13 years providing support to people with severe and persistent mental illnesses.

While providing support it was very common to be dealing with people who have co-occurring illegal substance use problems and mental health challenges. Illegal substance use frequently impeded mental health recovery. When people would recognize the need to seek treatment for their problematic substance use, we had to tell them there was often a six week wait, or more, to access substance use treatment. Usually, their resolve did not last during the wait. This cycle usually happened repeatedly without resolution. There was simply not enough facilities and staff to effectively provide illegal substance use recovery.

Supporting SB 775 and the necessary implementation and funding should be a priority for legislators because:

- People are dying from drug overdoses every single day, while one in 10 Oregonians struggles with Substance Use Disorder.
- The pandemic is only making things worse; new data from the Oregon Health Authority show that drug overdose deaths in Oregon were up 70 percent this spring compared to that same time last year.
- Addiction is fueling many of our state's serious problems like houselessness and poverty.
- Making criminals of people suffering from drug addiction is cruel and ineffective. It saddles people with criminal records that prevent them from getting housing, pursuing their education, obtaining loans, getting professional licenses, getting jobs and keeping jobs. And it is deeply inequitable: criminalizing drugs disproportionately harms poor people and people of color, who are 4 times more likely to be arrested.

Thanks so much for your efforts,

Steven Barnes