

Support for SB680

Dear Chair Gelser and Members of the Senate Committee on Human Services, Mental Health and Recovery:

I am writing today to request your support of SB680 for Peer Run Respite.

This is a desperately needed option for people in Oregon, to support those experiencing emotional pain, distress, and behavioral health crises who do not meet criteria for immediate and often very costly hospitalization yet have an urgent real time-need for peer support beyond what outpatient services and crisis lines can provide, and often beyond what family, neighbors or natural supports can provide (for those who are fortunate enough to have such persons in their lives).

The urgency of this needed option has been long agreed upon by many who have testified this year and in prior years with the Oregon State Legislature, and those informing OHA's Agency Recommended Budget and the Oregon Governor's Recommended Budget. Oregon's Consumer Advisory Council (OCAC) members and other peer run organizations have collaborated with OHA staff and advocates on doing research and planning for Oregon, looking at budgets, contracts, policies, models, data, materials, strategies and more from other states including onsite visits, conference workshops, and more. This is an important pilot project that many have already invested considerable time and energy to prepare for, building on the pioneering efforts of many peer leaders, allies and advocates in other states.

Research, understanding and experience from the impacts of trauma and the healing journey continue to reveal the critical importance of establishing a sense of safety, and the value of co-regulation with human connection. People in crises often have an overwhelming need to be heard, accepted and understood - and peers supporters are able to do exactly that through the lens of lived experience.

There are many environmental design attributes, both indoors and outdoors, that a warm, welcoming home-like environment can offer to provide a safe space for basic needs to be met from which the foundation for recovery, healing and wellness can begin. The opportunity to get sleep and nutrition, good air and water, and a chance to be heard, understood, accepted, and connected are huge. Also, getting a different perspective, supportive encouragement, strengths-based and solutions-focused thought-partnering can make the difference in someone's journey through the circumstances, struggle and/or crises that brought them to the point where changes are necessary for survival.

More resources available upon request.

Thank you for your time and consideration.
Please support SB650.

Sincerely,
Laura Rose Misaras