



Legacy Health
1919 N.W. Lovejoy St.
Portland, OR 97209
503.415.5600 phone
50.415.5777 fax

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Senate Committee on Human Services, Mental Health and Recovery
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

Re: SB 680

Legacy Health is a nonprofit health care provider in the Portland-Vancouver area and mid-Willamette Valley. We are an integrated network of care providers with over 100 primary care, urgent care, and specialty care clinics, and seven community-based and nationally recognized hospitals.

Additionally, we operate Unity Center for Behavioral Health, which provides acute care to people experiencing a behavioral health crisis. The facility provides immediate triage and access to behavioral health specialty care to stabilize patients in crisis through our psychiatric emergency services (PES). For patients who need longer term care to stabilize and recover, Unity Center offers inpatient care for both adults and adolescents. In its four years of operation, Unity Center has received more than 43,000 visits from people seeking care.

While Unity has made a major impact by enabling faster access to psychiatric care to help people in crisis begin stabilizing immediately, it is not the solution for everyone. There are people in our community who need more than traditional outpatient therapy but do not require the level of acute care that Unity provides. Moreover, many patients who are discharged from Unity Center because they no longer need treatment in an acute care environment would benefit from the opportunity to receive stepdown care to continue in their recovery.

Oregon also lacks needed peer respite services. Peer respite has proven to be an evidenced based, cost effective care model in many other states. Peer respites is intended to support individuals in a community, home-like setting to prevent the need psychiatric emergency services. Legacy supports SB 680 because we understand the value of peer services. They are a critical part of the care team at Unity.

The team at Unity Center remains focused on providing acute level care for the people seeking treatment at our facility. We will continue to partner with other behavioral health services organizations to help our patients get the best possible care when they leave Unity Center. However, greater availability of sub-acute services in our community, including peer respite, are needed.

Legacy urges support of SB 680.

Sincerely,

Melissa Eckstein, MSSW, MBA, LCSW
President, Unity Center for Behavioral Health