

My name is Chris Doud. Thank you for your leadership and in allowing me the opportunity to submit this testimony. I am a lifelong Oregonian, a resident of Columbia county, and a behavioral healthcare worker in Washington county. I work as a clinical supervisor for an outpatient coordinated specialty care team that services young people experiencing first episode psychosis. I am here representing myself as a private citizen.

Today I would like to be another voice advocating for more funding for behavioral health care and peer respite centers in particular (SB680). Peers are an incredible resource. A peer is a person with lived experience that assists people on their road to recovery from mental health, substance use or related health issues. Peer respites are voluntary residential programs designed to provide a safe space, and alternative to hospitalization, for individuals experiencing or at risk of experiencing a mental health crisis. These centers offer a vital housing and stabilization resource. There are over 12 in the US, and in 2015 Human Services Research Institute published a study which found that guests who utilized peer respite were 70% less likely to use inpatient or emergency services.

During this pandemic, the program I work for has had more people being referred than ever before. I've found it increasingly difficult to find resources to help stabilize people in crisis. With hospitals and inpatients struggling with capacity and other issues- people too often end up in a revolving door of crisis services and emergency services, never reaching a point of real stabilization and recovery.

More funding for behavior health is crucial and peer respite centers are key to ending this problem. I work firsthand with peer specialists and can also speak to their efficacy and importance in supporting people from a diverse range of communities in a way that our current psychiatric system often falls short of. Thank you for considering more funding for the field of human services to ensure wellness for all Oregonians during these trying times.