

Date February 17, 2021

TO: The Honorable Tawna Sanchez, Chair
House Committee on Behavioral Health

SUBJECT: HB 2980: Relating to residential peer support for individuals with mental illness who are in crisis

Chair Sanchez and Members of the Committee,

I write to enthusiastically support House Bill 2980, which would provide funding to peer-run organizations to operate peer respite centers to provide peer respite services to those with mental illness who experience acute distress, anxiety or emotional pain.

Investments in the community mental health system over the past decades have tended to focus on crisis services and longer term residential care. While these investments have been important, it has left a "missing middle" in the continuum. Increasing services such as peer respite will help fill that gap, and provide a vital resource to those in need of short term stabilization. This bill would include critical peer respite services as part of the continuum of behavioral health care.

This legislation also reinforces the fact that our behavioral health system must be consumer-driven. At Multnomah County, we have infused peer voice operationally through our Office of Consumer Engagement and continue to interface regularly with our Adult Mental Health and Substance Abuse Advisory Committee (AMHSAAC). AMHSAAC discussions have regularly focused on peer services, and this bill aligns with recommendations from the council, the HSRI Mental Health Analysis Report, and Multnomah County's legislative agenda to improve the Behavioral Health system.

Thank you for supporting this important piece of legislation.