

House Committee on Behavioral Health
Chair Sanchez and Members of the Committee
Testimony in support of HB 3123

Chair Sanchez and Committee Members,

My name is Joe Spendolini. Among other things, I serve as the Chairman of the Klamath County Chamber of Commerce Government Affairs Committee. For your consideration I respectfully offer this testimony in support House Bill 3123, which will extend Oregon's Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic demonstration program through December 31, 2023.

In addition to the normal pressures on mental health, our fellow citizens are experiencing isolation, job loss, confinement to homes, a closure or reduction of activities outside the home, the pressures of the accumulation of rent and mortgages that they have been unable to pay, all due to the pandemic. There has been a noticeable sense of dread and pessimism permeating large segments of our community. The combination of stresses from the pandemic has negatively impacted the mental health of many and has played a significant role in the increases in substance abuse and crisis calls to our local crisis line, according to local mental health expert, and Klamath County Mental Health Director, Stan Gilbert.

As I read through the testimony submitted by subject matter experts, the one constant I noticed was their ability to quantify the impact this program has had on the individuals they have treated and helped. The increase in the number of those receiving services is primarily due to the increase in access the citizens have had to the services they provide, because of this program. I believe the numbers of those helped are far greater than what has been captured and reported as they only account for those that directly received the services provided. Not included are the family members and those that reside in the same dwelling as those that benefitted from the services, especially the children. I can only imagine what life must be like inside the homes of those suffering a mental health crisis. That trauma can have a contagious effect on a family. If the one in crisis does not have access to the help they need, chances are that will negatively impact the mental health of others in the home.

As our schools begin to reopen to in-person learning, we are likely going to see an increase in the demand for services as teachers, which are mandatory reporters, begin to learn from the children the impact the conditions have had on them this past year.

Because of the pandemic, I believe the passage of HB 3123, extending the Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic, is needed more now than it was at the time it was originally passed.

I encourage you to approve the passage of HB 3123.

Respectfully,

Joe Spendolini
Chairman, Klamath County Chamber of Commerce
Government Affairs Committee