



## **Public Comment**

**December 4, 2023**

### **Joint Interim Committee on Addiction and Community Safety Response**

Dear Co-Chairs Lieber and Kropf, and members of the Joint Interim Committee On Addiction and Community Safety Response:

My name is Tony Morse, and I serve as the Policy and Advocacy Director of Oregon Recovers. I'm also a person in long-term recovery, which for me means I haven't had a drink in nearly 7 years.

I'm here today to respectfully urge this Committee to support the Oregon Recovers Emergency 12-Step Plan To End Oregon's Addiction Crisis. The goals of the Plan are to:

- Reduce fatal drug overdoses and alcohol-related deaths by 50% within one year; and
- Eliminate Detox, Residential Treatment & Recovery Housing wait lists within six months.

While these goals might sound aggressive, we believe they reflect what must be done in order to meet the crisis where it is at. Oregon's struggle with addiction continues to stand out:

- We have the second highest rate of substance use disorder in the country, and the fifth highest rate of alcohol use disorder.<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile, we rank 50th in access to treatment.
- The deficit between active addiction and the ability to receive help doesn't end there. Per the 2022 OHSU Substance Use Disorder Services Inventory and Gap Analysis, there is a 49% gap in services needed to address substance use disorder across the continuum of care in Oregon.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://mhacbo.org/media/2021\\_epidemiology.pdf](https://mhacbo.org/media/2021_epidemiology.pdf)

- Alcohol kills 6 Oregonians per day,<sup>2</sup> and unintentional overdoses kill another 3.<sup>3</sup> Drug overdose deaths nearly tripled between 2019 and 2021.<sup>4</sup> This is a crisis that demands an emergency response.

The Oregon Recovers Plan provides a roadmap for meeting the moment, and recognizes that we need a coordinated response. We must move away from a fragmented and siloed approach, and help stakeholders consolidate their efforts.

- Plan features include: mobilization of emergency detox and respite centers, expanding recovery housing, increasing utilization of medication assisted treatment, and amending, not ending, Measure 110 to encourage recovery.

Solving this crisis will require investment, and per the 12-Step Plan, I would respectfully urge this Committee to consider reallocating revenue generated by existing alcohol taxes and existing alcohol surcharges.

- Linking alcohol revenue to behavioral health spending is fair, reasonable, and would provide sustainable funding for services that everyone agrees we need.
- The existing \$0.50 per bottle distilled spirits surcharge generates \$45.2 million per biennium.<sup>5</sup> Per statute, all of that revenue is routed to the General Fund.<sup>6</sup> A minor modification to the law could earmark those funds for needed addiction services.
- Oregon beer and wine taxes generate another \$40 million per biennium.<sup>7</sup> Some of this revenue goes towards addiction services, but not enough. This is another revenue stream I would respectfully urge this Committee to consider as a funding source for the behavioral health investments that our addiction crisis demands.

Please support the Oregon Recovers Emergency 12-Step Plan To End Oregon's Addiction Crisis.

Thank you.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.opb.org/article/2023/03/15/oregon-addiction-alcohol-related-deaths-treatment/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.opb.org/article/2023/05/30/oregon-worsening-drug-crisis-fentanyl-overdoses/>

<sup>4</sup>

<https://www.oregonlive.com/crime/2023/12/man-20-accused-of-selling-fentanyl-laced-pills-to-teen-who-died-of-od-in-ne-portland.html>

<sup>5</sup> [https://www.oregon.gov/das/financial/documents/2023-25\\_gb.pdf](https://www.oregon.gov/das/financial/documents/2023-25_gb.pdf) (page 240).

<sup>6</sup> ORS 471.810(5).

<sup>7</sup>

[https://www.oregon.gov/olcc/Docs/commission\\_minutes/2022/Commission-Revenue-Presentation-2022.pdf](https://www.oregon.gov/olcc/Docs/commission_minutes/2022/Commission-Revenue-Presentation-2022.pdf)