



Dear Co-chairs Lieber and Kropf and members of the Joint Interim Committee on Addiction and Community Safety Response,

My name is Janie Gullickson and I am the Executive Director of the peer-run organization The Mental Health & Addiction Association of Oregon (MHA/O) and a home owner in Clackamas County. I am also a person in long-term recovery who has not used substances or alcohol since June 9th, 2008. In my past I was a person very much like those we see deep in their addiction and mental health on our streets today. I hope my testimony conveys that recovery is possible and that recovery beings with hope! This holds true for our community and system as well! We need a collective hope that change is possible and we can address this issue together!

I want to thank the committee for the time spent on Monday listening to so many constituents' experience, subject matter expertise and passion regarding the overwhelming issues related to addiction and mental health in our state and beyond. I am grateful for the thoughtful approach you are taking in addressing the crisis in our state, looking at the entire system and the dire needs in our community.

We know Oregon communities CANNOT WAIT. We need more treatment services and we need them NOW. That is what will help our communities. Oregon needs to immediately open more detox and stabilization centers for people in crisis who cannot get into care. It is an outrage that Portland has failed to re-open the lost capacity, which has left a crisis on our streets. Oregon communities also need long-term recovery support services across the continuum of care but especially after all other formal services have been utilized. Recovery is the long game and places for people to be in community with each other navigating not only recovery but discovering who they are and what they would to do as they move forward. Recovery centers need to be accessible in every community!

The Mental Health and Addiction Association of Oregon (MHA/O) is here to be part of the solution! MHA/O helps thousands of people experiencing mental health and addiction issues find recovery and become thriving community members. MHA/O uses a peer-to-peer approach to provide the personalized support services to people who want to find recovery and move towards making positive changes in their lives.

Since 2001 MHA AO has been committed to promoting self-directed recovery and wellness for individuals experiencing mental health and addiction issues, regardless of their background. Most members of our team have lived the life of those on the street and are now in the trenches helping others still there. At the Mental Health & Addiction Association of Oregon, we believe that recovery starts with hope. The reason we're able to provide that hope is because we've experienced addiction and mental health challenges ourselves. As an organization, we are 175+ individuals who've been right where they are, so we're able to connect quickly and walk beside them on their own journeys.

Through our shared experiences we work to build a relationship, develop trust and inspire hope with those we serve. Through peer support and recovery mentor interactions we explore what is needed with the person struggling and connect them to available services as well as continue to be a supportive presence in their recovery journey.

MHA AO is a forward-thinking community partner working together with other public and private organizations to address the impact of addiction and untreated mental illness in Portland and across the state. We are honored to provide peer support services as part of a community wide, all hands on deck response to reach our community members who are struggling the most. We look forward to collaborating with state county and local governments, law enforcement and businesses to find solutions and be a proactive partner in healing our beloved community.

MHA AO is currently working on the hammer-ready MHA AO Recovery Campus and Housing projects located at 8935 SE Powell Blvd. in Portland. Please see the attached 1-pager. The Lents neighborhood and surrounding area are in dire need of accessible services and we are so excited for the location and proximity and relationship with Yakima Valley Farmworkers Clinic (the new Rosewood) right across the street.

I have included the link to the fly through of the MHA AO building <https://youtu.be/V7WTL5jUBWs> and we are developing the recovery housing with up to 69 beds. The 1-pager reflects our remaining need for the MHA AO Recovery Campus building totaling \$3.9M to allow us to complete the tenant improvements and begin serving the community in August, 2024. What has been raised includes the purchase price of \$4M and the \$1.8M for architecture, engineering, supplies, construction costs etc.

I am reaching out to all possible funding sources to request support to move forward as the city permitting process is almost completed. I would love to host a tour and share more details or answer questions if you have them.

In closing, we at MHA AO urge you to reject calls to return to the failed War on Drugs that harmed our communities and stole the futures of so many Black and Brown Oregonians. We have the opportunity to do better and we must do better.

We know that harsh drug laws don't prevent drug use and addiction: 32 states have higher overdose rates than Oregon, and all of them have harsher drug laws. Locking up people struggling with addiction isn't going to solve the problems we face.

We all deserve to be safe, regardless of where we live, how we look, or who we are. The reliance on punishment and prison hasn't worked – we can improve public safety by focusing on preventing and addressing the root causes of crime — like poverty and lack of opportunity. We need to invest in proven solutions, such as access to mental health and addiction services.

We can't arrest our way out of homelessness. To actually solve this issue, we need to focus on affordable housing and expanded mental health and addiction treatment.

Everyone in Oregon who needs treatment should have access to it. If the legislature were to fully fund services and work on real solutions, we can start the path to healing.

Thank you so much for your care, passion and ongoing work to find solutions for Oregon!

All my best,

Janie Gullickson MPA: HA, CRM II, PSS

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