



Testimony in Support of HB 2757 –988 crisis line

Public Hearing June 23rd, 2023

Chair Meek, Vice Chair Boquist, and members of the Senate Revenue Committee:

My name is Karen Wheeler and I am the Chief Executive Officer of GOBHI (Greater Oregon Behavioral Health Inc).

GOBHI is a behavioral health and social services network serving in 12 rural/frontier counties with the goal of empowering individuals and communities to achieve better health. GOBHI was established in 1994 and is a non-profit organization.

GOBHI supports HB 2757

HB 2757 is critically important to provide sustainable funding for our behavioral health crisis system. Getting to people at their time of need is the most compassionate and cost effective way to deliver care in a behavioral health crisis. Early intervention when a person has reached out for service will save the entire system money because the person will be treated according to their needs, at the time of their need, and less likely to access more expensive systems like hospitals and jails.

In particular, GOBHI would point out to the committee that in our service area which covers 50,000 square miles in Eastern Oregon's rural and frontier areas, it is sometimes challenging for care teams to get to a person in crisis quickly enough but providing care by phone while a team is dispatched could very well save lives.

The 988 system needs a dedicated funding stream to adequately support the behavioral health mobile crisis system. We all know that our system needs more funds and this is a reasonable step providing some parity with other health care systems and 911. Dedicated funding is necessary if the 12-county area is to build toward a system where mobile crisis is available over such vast distances in rural and frontier areas.

Please support HB 2757.

Thank you.

Karen Wheeler
CEO GOBHI

Submitted by Anna Braun, Braun Law LLC on behalf of GOBHI