

Submitter: Kevin Fitts
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Health Care
Measure: SB514

February 13th, 2023

Dear Chair Patterson and Senate Health Committee

I am writing to express my strong support for Bill SB 514 and the critical importance of suicide prevention in our communities. Suicide prevention, loss, and struggle are complex issues that affect individuals throughout their lifespan. The experience of suicide can be paralyzing, numbing, distressing, and painful for those who suffer, and it is crucial that we prioritize effective support for those in need.

As a champion for peer respite in 2021, I believe that we need alternatives to expensive and overstimulating hospitalization that can be difficult for individuals to navigate. It is essential to help people connect and not feel isolated, to regain a sense of safety, to get basic needs met, and to find their way forward.

There are many varieties of how people struggle, and not all individuals are willing to or able to touch the system. However, the system should leverage its resources to promote awareness, training, peer support, individualized person-centered planning, and promising modalities that are working. This includes resources such as PeerGalaxy, which shares online meetings for loss and attempt survivors, such as Alternatives to Suicide, Suicide is the Language of Pain, and other wellness activities. As a member of the Oregon Consumer Advisory Council and stakeholder meetings for the ASIPP, I have seen firsthand the importance of prioritizing an advisory council with parity to move this plan forward. Whether that advisory council is operated internally to and by OHA or externally through a contract mechanism, as is the case with the Oregon Alliance to Prevent Suicide, Oregon needs to prioritize an advisory council with parity to ensure effective suicide prevention.

Thank you for your commitment to this critical issue, and I strongly urge you to support Bill SB 514.

Sincerely, Kevin Fitts,
Oregon Mental Health Consumers Association