

Thank you, Chairman Patterson and members of the committee. My name is Michelle Bangen, and I am joining you as the Equity Co-Chair of the Oregon Alliance to Prevent Suicide; the Co-founder of Incite Agency for Change, a public health education social enterprise; and as someone with lived experience and a passion for suicide prevention. I am from Corvallis, OR, and I am here in support of Senate Bill 514.

In the past, Governor Brown, and now Governor Kotek, have both identified suicide prevention as a priority in Oregon. The state has put significant energy and resources towards addressing youth suicide, which includes the creation of a comprehensive suicide prevention framework and Youth Suicide Intervention and Prevention Plan. This has led to the increased availability of resources and support for many youth-serving agencies. But suicide prevention is a lifespan issue. It only makes sense to put the same thoughtful, strategic, concerted effort towards addressing suicide among adults as well, and the youth-focused work has given us a valuable roadmap.

This work is so important because we continue to see suicide as the 10th leading cause of death in our state, the 2nd leading cause of death among ages 5-34, and the 3rd leading cause of death for 35-44 year-olds. We are also losing many older adults to suicide, and we see especially high suicide rates in certain professions. Suicide rates are going up significantly in other states, and Oregon already has one of the highest.

But suicide is preventable! It requires us to use proven strategies, equitable approaches, coordinated efforts, and the voices of those with lived experience. I have had the honor of being one of 130 individuals who helped create our state's very first Adult Suicide Intervention and Prevention Plan. By passing Senate Bill 514, that work can live up to its promise and potential at a time when it's needed more than ever.

I ask that you please vote in favor of SB 514, ensuring the sustainability of this thoughtful and strategic work to address suicide across the lifespan. Thank you for your time and consideration.