

Testimony OPPOSING HB 2976

Submitted by Oregon Recovers

March 2, 2023

House Committee On Economic Development and Small Business

Chair Bynum, Vice-Chair Nguyen, Vice-Chair Morgan, and Members of the House Committee On Economic Development and Small Business:

My name is Tony Morse, and it's my honor and privilege to serve as the Policy and Advocacy Director of Oregon Recovers. We are a movement of people in recovery from addiction with the mission to transform Oregon's fractured and incomplete addiction recovery system into a recovery-based, continuum of care which recognizes addiction as a chronic disease. I'm also a person in long-term recovery, which for me means I've not had a drink in over 6 years.

I'm here today to urge you to vote against HB 2976.

The text of this bill declares that the distilled spirits industry affects the well-being of Oregonians. That's accurate, but not for good reasons.

- Alcohol is a toxic, addictive carcinogen that kills more Oregon residents than all types of drug overdoses combined.
- The World Health Organization says no level of alcohol consumption is safe for our health, and the International Agency for Research on Cancer has categorized alcohol as a Group 1 Carcinogen—a distinction it shares with asbestos, radiation, and tobacco.

We don't use state resources to promote smoking, and we shouldn't use them to promote alcoholic beverages.

- Oregon ranks fifth nationally in alcohol addiction, with 12.34% of Oregonians over the age of 12 being addicted to alcohol.
- Excessive alcohol use is Oregon's third-leading cause of preventable death and disease, and the state's alcohol-related death rate increased by over 30% between 2011 and 2020.
- In 2020 alone, Oregon recorded 2,536 alcohol-related deaths. That's about 42 per Oregon House District, 85 per Oregon Senate District, and roughly 33 deaths per every one of Oregon's almost 80 distilleries.

State money that could be spent on preventing these deaths should not be used to promote what causes them.

Oregon's alcohol crisis is an equity emergency. OHA says excessive drinking impacts BIPOC communities more severely, as they experience higher rates of alcohol-related diseases and other harms.

- Using state resources to promote a product that disproportionately harms BIPOC Oregonians reinforces systemic racism.
- Instead, I urge the Committee to adopt a bottle surcharge much larger than the one in this bill, and to use the money it raises to pay for the culturally and linguistically specific detox and clinical treatment programs that are so desperately needed.

The distilled spirits industry claims they generate \$1.6 billion in revenue for the state, but that is three times smaller than the \$4.8 billion that excessive drinking cost Oregon in 2019.

- Alcohol is a net drain on our economy, and there is no economic argument that justifies ignoring the outsized role that the alcohol industry continues to play in Oregon's lethal addiction crisis.

Voting against HB 2976, and investing in much needed treatment services would benefit our economy much more than a state funded distillery board ever could. Thank you.