

Testimony SUPPORTING SB 238
Submitted by Oregon Recovers
April 26, 2023
House Committee On Education

Chair Neron, Vice-Chair Wright, Vice-Chair Hudson and Members of the Committee:

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 for SB 238.

Oregon's Opioid crisis is an immediate and lethal threat to public health.

- Oregon recorded 280 unintentional opioid overdose deaths in 2019. That number grew to 472 in 2020, which is an increase of nearly 70%. And in 2021, Oregon lost 745 lives to unintentional opioid overdoses—well over two and a half times the number of lives lost in 2019.
- Illicitly manufactured Fentanyl is a common component of these tragic losses—it was involved in at least 512 opioid deaths in 2021. That's over 8 deaths per Oregon House District, and about 17 deaths for every Oregon Senate District.

Opioid overdose deaths are preventable, and we have a duty to stop them. Further, we have an obligation to teach young people how to keep themselves and their peers safe.

- Oregonians aged 12 through 17 account for 305,645 state residents. And according to OHSU's 2022 Substance Use Disorder Services Inventory and Gap Analysis, nearly 8% of them have a substance use disorder. That's roughly 24,360 12 through 17 year olds. That's about 406 kids per Oregon House District, and 812 kids per Oregon Senate District.
- We know that treatment saves lives, but unfortunately our state ranks 50th—very last—in terms of access to treatment.
- Oregon's lack of treatment access underscores the need for education and prevention. The OHSU Gap Analysis I mentioned earlier says that significant investments in prevention are needed to support youth and families.

This bill supports fentanyl education that will prevent overdose deaths. The number of reasons to support this bill are many. So are the number of lives we can save. Thank you.