

Submitter: Andrew Didway
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means
Measure: SB5506

Senate Bill 603 is more of the same, throwing money at a problem when time, deliberation, and compassion are needed. I work with a man in the Washington County Jail experiencing schizophrenia and who has tried to hang himself twice. An emergency order to transport him to the Oregon State Hospital was signed by a judge and per that order this man in jail was to be transported to the state hospital within 7 days. It has now been 6 weeks! I am a Peer Support Specialist who has experienced addiction and I believe most people who have experienced addiction see the absolute insanity of what Portland and the non-profits have been doing here. What we are doing is like both a cold, absent father providing money and material goods to the family but not putting in the time, care, or consideration. On the other hand Oregon has been like a blindly compassionate mother paying for her child's apartment, food, and drugs while they kill themselves with fentanyl. I worked at a homeless shelter and the director said, "there is this myth that if you build it they will come, that by offering services we will attract more homeless and we just don't see that." I can tell you that is 100 percent false, interview people on the streets who come from all over the country to Portland exactly because they know they will be supported here like no where else. Do these people deserve support? Absolutely! But I submit to you that what we think support is, is actually fueling the crisis. Again, it is like the cold, absent father while simultaneously it is the bleeding heart mother who desperately wants to help but ends up doing more harm. Almost everyone who has been through addiction will tell you there is a way to help someone and be compassionate without supporting them in killing themselves. That is exactly what we are doing! We are funding all of the material support homeless people with addiction need to sustain a dangerous lifestyle. We are also allowing severely mentally ill people to suffer on the streets. It is madness to think that we need to allocate \$25 million to hand out free money when there are people in county jails with severe mental illness or people who are actively taking advantage of our wisdom-less compassion to get high! Has any of this "support" been working in Portland been working? Look around, the proof is in the pudding! We need more psychiatric beds, we need more treatment centers. and we need more affordable housing units! Again, I ask, has what we have been doing working? Families don't feel safe here, people are just openly and casually smoking fentanyl on public transportation. Kids and parents do not feel safe walking to schools. Please stop throwing money at problems or at people. These are real people that deserve serious help, not just money and this is, without question, a humanitarian crisis we are in the middle of.