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1805 NE Sandy Blvd
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February 5th, 2025

Subject: Support for Governor's Recommended Budget

Dear Members of the Joint Ways and Means Committee:

My name is Solara Salazar, and I am the Co-Founder and Executive Director of both Cielo Treatment Center and West Coast Sober Housing. I am writing today in strong support of the Governor's recommended budget, particularly its investments in addressing homelessness and strengthening behavioral health services across Oregon.

As an organization deeply involved in providing sober housing and substance use treatment, we see firsthand the direct impact that stable housing and access to comprehensive behavioral health care have on individuals striving for recovery. The Governor's proposed \$188 million investment in reducing homelessness is a crucial step toward not only providing shelter but also ensuring that people have the necessary resources to rebuild their lives. As the Governor stated in her budget, "People are not just connected with a home, they are given the ability to address compounding issues, like getting a stable job or addressing behavioral health or addiction." This approach aligns directly with the work we do—helping individuals overcome barriers to long-term stability and wellness.

In 2024, through the Governor's expansion project, West Coast Sober Housing opened an additional women's sober home, supporting women who suffer from mental health and addiction. The results of this investment have been profound:

- 59% of residents became completely self-sufficient, no longer needing financial or service assistance.
- 44% transitioned to stable permanent housing, securing long-term independence.
- 16% of all residents went on to work in the addiction treatment or behavioral health field, directly addressing our workforce shortage and strengthening the recovery community.

These outcomes demonstrate that investments in sober support services are not only critical for individual recovery but also for broader social and economic stability. Sobriety leads to a reduction in crime, family reunification, fewer emergency room visits and shelter stays, and stronger, more self-sufficient communities. These services are not only the ethical right choice, but they also represent a financially responsible investment—reducing the need for expensive interventions and emergency resources while helping people rebuild their lives.

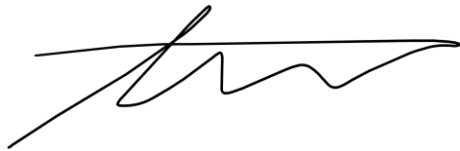
I also urge your support for the Governor's full recommendations for behavioral health investments, which are essential for ensuring a strong continuum of care. In particular, I support:

- \$90 million for substance use disorder treatment, residential treatment, and withdrawal management.
- \$24 million in workforce incentives.
- \$19.6 million for diversion and deflection services through the Criminal Justice Commission.
- \$17 million for inpatient SUD and psychiatric services for youth.

Finally, I strongly support full funding of the Medicaid budget to ensure that individuals can access the care they need without financial barriers. Medicaid is a vital resource for many Oregonians receiving treatment for substance use and mental health disorders, and fully funding this program is essential to expanding and sustaining critical services.

The Governor's recommended budget takes meaningful steps toward addressing Oregon's most pressing challenges, and I urge the committee to support these investments. Thank you for your time and consideration. Please do not hesitate to reach out if I can provide any further insight from the perspective of those working directly in the field.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Solara Salazar', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

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