



March 7, 2025

Joint Committee On Addiction and Community Safety Response

Re: HB 2502 Relating to youth substance use; declaring an emergency

Co-Chairs Prozanski and Kropf and Members of the Committee:

While Oregon is facing a state-wide crisis related to substance use among adolescents, access to substance use services, and overdose rates among teens, the prevalence and needs are even more alarming and impactful within Southern Oregon communities. Our students self-report rates higher than the state in having unmet emotional and mental health needs, drinking, using marijuana, and using prescription drugs not prescribed to them. To exacerbate the crisis, Jackson county is experiencing a 47% overall service gap in recommended prevention, harm reduction, treatment and recovery services, and is tied with two other counties for having the highest risk of hospitalization for alcohol and drug use in the state. The Southern Oregon region has been identified as having the largest percentage statewide of organizations reporting inadequacies in their capacity to service clients. Schools across Jackson and Josephine Counties have been identified as an under-leveraged health and wellness support, with community members describing a shortage of full time personnel, and variability in the range of programs and services across their local schools.

Following the enactment of House Bill 2767, the Southern Oregon community rallied behind efforts to establish an approved Oregon Recovery School in our region. Community leaders from our CCO's, healthcare organizations, county public health, tribal health, juvenile justice, component school districts, treatment providers, and recovery organizations became actively involved to identify the needs within our youth population that could be supported through an Oregon Recovery School, and how to ensure their complex needs are fully supported. In preparation for the anticipated 2025-2027 biennium Request for Application from the Oregon Department of Education, it quickly became apparent that the current funding model for approved Oregon Recovery Schools does not fully fund the costs associated with the model. To provide the supports and services our students need to thrive, including a high quality academic education, on-site integrated substance-use and behavioral health services from appropriately qualified professionals, and a separate school setting away from the temptations and triggers of other high school programs, we will need to rely on a significant amount of alternative funding and in-kind donations, resulting in financial volatility and compromising the sustainability of the program over time.

Thank you for your consideration of House Bill 2502 that will address this funding gap for Oregon Recovery Schools to ensure the complex needs of our students are met and communities like Southern Oregon can provide and sustain this life-saving resource to our youth.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sandy Stack". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sandy Stack  
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