

Bill: OR HB 2502

Hearing Type: Public Hearing

Location: Court St. NE, Salem, OR 97301

Wednesday, March 12, 2025 5:00 PM

Sponsor: Pre-session filed (at the request of Joint Interim Committee on Addiction and Community Safety Response for Representative Jason Kropf)

Relating Clause: Relating to youth substance use; declaring an emergency.

Good evening, Chairs Prozanski and Kropf, for the record, my name is Erica Fuller and I am a Commissioner of the Alcohol and Drug Policy Commission, Vice Chair of the Oregon Youth Addiction Alliance (OYAA), and Chief Executive Officer of Rimrock Trails Treatment Services in Central Oregon. I am testifying in support of HB 2502.

The three leading causes of death among teens are accidents, homicides, and suicides, with substance use being the primary contributor. There is a strong correlation between the age of substance use onset and the course and severity of addiction as an adult. In fact, data shows that 90% of adults struggling with addiction started using as teenagers. The sad reality is that less than 8% of teens with a substance use disorder (SUD) receive the treatment they need.

As a teenager, my life was forever changed by a tragedy involving my best friend, who suffered from an untreated methamphetamine addiction, and that is why I advocate ensuring that we, as leaders, develop effective, research-based policy, to provide the help they need.

Treatment works and outcomes are significantly improved when treatment begins sooner, from the age of onset, with reductions in use as an adult by nearly 60%! Nearly all teens with untreated substance use disorders can be found still attending school and about 47% show up in emergency rooms, providing opportunities for their early identification and linkage to treatment. Additionally, adolescent substance use rarely exists without co-occurring mental health conditions and should not be treated separately, even though it often is.

Today's legislation, the initiatives of the Oregon Youth Addiction Alliance and the preliminary recommendations in HB 4002 are based in extensive research identifying the key elements for a comprehensive youth system: early identification and access to co-occurring treatment, family involvement, and ongoing monitoring and peer support; and it is being done successfully elsewhere.

This is how we will transform Oregon's youth system, protecting future generations from the harms of untreated addiction.

Thank you,