

Co-Chairs Prozanski and Kropf, and Members of the Joint Committee on Addiction and Community Safety Response:

My name is Devyn Jacobson. My commitment to awareness of substance abuse in youth began in high school when I was member of the Teen Advisory Board (TAB)—a student-led club and initiative of a substance use prevention and mental health promotion organization dedicated to educating youth and collaborating with the community to raise awareness about upstream prevention. TAB was an incredible group to be part of, where many of us discovered our passion for advocacy and learned how to make a difference in our schools, families, and community.

My family has been directly impacted by substance use disorders (SUDs), and being part of TAB taught me that SUDs are a family disease; however, that didn't mean I had to feel shame and fear of this generational cycle. On the contrary, I learned facts and coping skills that allowed me to see my parent through the lens of the disease rather than as a failure. TAB provided me with the courage, strength, wisdom, and tools to face the challenges of the disease head-on, and, more importantly, taught me how to prevent having it myself.

By learning how to prevent substance use, delay it—especially when there is a family history—and discussing mental health openly, I realized I wasn't alone. TAB empowered me to speak up, take the lead, and support myself and others. I needed this education and platform as a youth to equip and defend myself from the ways which substance use has been normalized, in my home environment and in the environments I would encounter as I moved on from high school.

In my present career, I work directly with children in foster care and their families, within the state of Oregon. Each day, I witness SUDs as the cause of division within families and altering the trajectory of lives, further impacting the stability of children. In my work, I work alongside youth as young as 11 years old who are affected by their own substance use. I see the generation being raised up now, already impacted by the resources that are unavailable to them. The daily exposure to this reality compels me to advocate for future generations as I draw upon my personal experience of overcoming substance use disorder (SUDs) and gaining the empowerment to reclaim control over my life. Without the intervention of a program offered within my school, I would not have had the opportunity to transform my circumstances from that of brokenness cause by SUDs to one of self-empowerment. This comprehensive support, which encompasses the entire well-being of students, is crucial for safeguarding vulnerable children and providing them with the chance to thrive when knowledge and opportunities to seek support are scarce and unknown.

I strongly support HB 3321 (and the related bills being considered). I am expectant that HB 3321 can bring more prevention initiatives to youth across Oregon. I know firsthand how critical upstream prevention programs, groups, etc., are. They provide essential information, foster resilience, and create a sense of belonging for young people who may feel isolated or overwhelmed. By strengthening and expanding prevention efforts, we can help future

generations make informed decisions and ensure they have robust support systems as they grow. It is empowering when a youth is given the tools to break generational change, take control of their future, and prosper in a future that turns addiction and substance use around. Thank you for your leadership on these vital issues. Your support for HB 3321 and comprehensive, youth-focused prevention will make a tremendous difference in the lives of young people and their families throughout our state. I appreciate your time and respectfully request your “Do Pass” and “Yes” votes on these measures.

Sincerely,
Devyn Jacobson

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