



March 25, 2025

Senate Committee on Human Services  
Oregon State Legislature  
900 Court St. NE  
Salem, OR 97301

**RE: Testimony in Opposition of Senate Bill SB 989**

Dear Chair Gelsler Bouin, Vice-Chair Lithincum, and members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of the American Civil Liberties Union of Oregon (ACLU of Oregon). The ACLU of Oregon is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to preserving and enhancing civil rights and civil liberties, with more than 44,000 members and donor supporters statewide.

**We strongly oppose Senate Bill 989, which would permit a parent or guardian to admit their children, with or without the child's consent, including minors above the age of 14, into an inpatient treatment facility or program licensed by the Oregon Health Authority or the Department of Human Services for certain mental, emotional or behavioral health or substance use disorder treatment.**

SB 989 was introduced without the robust stakeholder engagement and research necessary for such a complex and consequential policy change. As currently written, SB 989 would grant parents the authority to make medical decisions on behalf of their children regarding substance use disorder treatment against their child's consent. More concerning, the bill expands involuntary treatment authority beyond substance use to include "mental, emotional or behavioral health treatment". **This language is overly broad and would prevent youth from making medical decisions regarding their mental, emotional or behavioral health treatment and could lead to forcing youth into programs that are far beyond addressing substance use. It would also limit confidentiality protections for minors above the age of 14.**

**By permitting parents to make medical decisions for treatment for minors above the age of 14 against their will, the bill would conflict with our current Oregon state law that allows minors 15 years and older the right to make their own medical decisions with confidentiality.** By creating this exception, we are removing confidentiality and autonomy for minors regarding medical decisions on substance use disorder treatment and their mental health. We must be cautious of the precedent this bill creates and ensure we are protecting minors rights in their medical decisions and privacy.

**Research shows that involuntary treatment, including for youth, is largely ineffective and should be used as a last resort.**<sup>1</sup> It is critical that any legislative response to youth substance use is grounded in evidence-based practices, developed through inclusive,

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<sup>1</sup> Source: <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC7879425/>

informed discussions that center youth voices and needs. Failing to do so not only jeopardizes outcomes but risks causing further harm to the very individuals the policy aims to help.

Moreover, **SB 989 fails to account for the current systemic gaps in access to voluntary substance use treatment for minors.** Oregon's existing treatment infrastructure is already strained, with long waitlists and inadequate capacity. Expanding eligibility for involuntary treatment without addressing these barriers will only deepen the crisis and further burden an already under-resourced system.

Just last year, the legislature intentionally paused discussions around involuntary youth treatment in order to allow time for deeper engagement with experts, advocates, and impacted communities. We urge the committee to honor that commitment and refrain from advancing SB 989 until such engagement and analysis have occurred.

We recognize the importance of addressing youth substance use disorders with urgency and compassion. But this bill, as written, is not the solution. We respectfully urge the committee **not** to move SB 989 forward without the **thoughtful deliberation and stakeholder engagement needed to craft truly effective, youth-centered, and evidence-based responses.**

Respectfully,

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If you have any questions regarding our concerns, please feel free to email Jessica Maravilla, Policy Director at [jmaravilla@aclu-or.org](mailto:jmaravilla@aclu-or.org).