

Submitter: Shaelyn Bangs
On Behalf Of: Teen Mental Health
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB5006

Co Chairs and Members of the Ways and Means Committee,
My name is Shaelyn Bangs. I am a 15 year old freshman in Clatsop County. I was able to speak to a few of you at dinner while you visited Astoria, but I wished to still enter an official comment. I am writing today to urge you to prioritize Oregon's budget toward programs and initiatives that will clearly benefit our struggling youth in Oregon. Statistics highlight the mental health struggles faced by Oregon youth.

According to Mental Health America and Oregon.gov:

-We are ranked 49th in the nation for high prevalence of mental health concerns combined with low access to care.

-Oregon has the highest rate of childhood depression at over 24%, which is 3% higher than the national average.

-15% of Oregon's youth experience serious thoughts of suicide—nearly 2% higher than the national average.

-44% of children with a diagnosed mental health disorder do not receive care.

These statistics represent friends at my school, young people in my community, who are struggling every single day. We deserve access to timely, effective care and the opportunity to thrive, not just survive. For me personally, a rural county kid, access to care equaled three years on waiting lists for diagnosis and counseling. I was blessed to have supportive family and friends while I waited for help. Other kids don't always have those same supports. I think Oregon can do better.

I urge this committee to allocate state funds toward expanding access to youth mental health services. Thank you for your time and I hope you consider Oregon's youth in your budget decisions. I appreciated chatting with those of you I met at dinner in Astoria. You didn't have to talk with me, but you did, and that means a lot to me. Thank you.

Smiles,
Shaelyn B