

Submitter: Jaiden Morrow
On Behalf Of: PEER shelter
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB5006

Good afternoon, Co-Chairs Lieber and Sanchez, and members of the committee. My name is Jaiden Morrow, and I am a Certified Nursing Assistant at Looking Glass's PEER Shelter. I stand before you today not only as a proud employee of this vital organization, but as someone whose life was profoundly impacted—better yet, saved—by its services.

As a young person, I turned to Looking Glass programs like the Counseling Program and the New Roads Day Program when I had nowhere else to go. These spaces weren't just services—they were lifelines.

At just 14 years old, I was homeless—sleeping under bridges, exposed to the elements, uncertain where my next meal would come from—unsure if I would make it through the night. That trauma has never left me. Ten years have passed, and I still carry the invisible weight of that fear, that uncertainty, and that loneliness.

While I found refuge and support through Looking Glass during the day, one thing I didn't have was safe, stable shelter at night. PEER didn't exist then. Harm reduction wasn't an option. And without a secure place to sleep and my basic needs unmet, my life took a very difficult turn—my path led me through years of substance use, involvement with the justice system, and a long, painful road toward recovery.

But I survived. And through that survival came a purpose: to return to the very community that once extended a hand to me when I was lost. In October 2024, I came full circle and joined the staff at Looking Glass. Today, I have the honor of supporting youth who are walking the same difficult path I once did.

Every day at PEER, I witness the life-changing impact of our work. PEER is not simply a shelter—it is a sanctuary. It offers stability, housing support, food, hygiene resources, employment assistance, and most critically, hope. It provides the safety and compassion I so desperately needed and never had.

That's why I'm here today—to urge you to continue supporting the Behavioral Health Resource Networks. We need to do more to support people struggling with substance use, mental health, and their families—and that starts by sustaining and expanding funding for BHRNs.

Thanks to BHRN funding, nearly 300,000 service encounters have taken place across Oregon—connecting individuals to care that simply would not have existed

before. In my own work, I've seen firsthand how BHRN-backed programs like PEER are transforming lives—providing critical harm reduction services and a path forward for so many who have been left behind.

Statewide, BHRN providers have reported incredible increases in access and outcomes:

- * A 296% increase in housing services
- * A 143% increase in substance use treatment encounters
- * A 286% increase in employment services
- * A nearly 300% increase in individuals served overall

These numbers aren't just data points—they represent lives changed, families supported, and futures restored.

At PEER Shelter alone, we've already served over 360 young people, their children, and their pets. But if emergency funding isn't allocated, we will be forced to reduce our shelter capacity from 24 beds to just 13. That means turning away youth who are actively trying to recover, reconnect, and rebuild—just like I once was.

I urge you to allocate additional general fund dollars to support BHRNs and addiction recovery providers so these services can continue without interruption. Without this investment, we risk not only turning youth away but losing the progress we've made in offering them a real chance at stability.

PEER is essential. Looking Glass is essential. BHRNs are essential. Please help us continue this life-saving work.

Thank you for your time, consideration, and for your commitment to the youth and families of Oregon.