

Submitter: Elinka Dalhover
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Early Childhood and Behavioral Health
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1547

February 2, 2026

Chair Reynolds, Vice Chair Anderson, and Members of the Committee:

I write to you today to express my strong support for SB 1547, a bill that would establish a licensed behavioral health and wellness practitioner.

As a Regional Outreach Executive at Discover Recovery, I see a great need to expand the behavioral health workforce at all levels. Working in adult substance use disorder treatment, we mostly focus on the individual struggling with addiction. But substance use rarely exists in isolation. Families, especially those with young children, are deeply impacted, and the trauma they experience often goes unaddressed. Young children living in homes affected by substance use are exposed to chronic stress, instability, and emotional unpredictability during critical developmental years. Caregivers in these families are frequently overwhelmed, exhausted, and unsure how to support their children while also navigating the chaos and emotional toll of substance use in the household. A licensed behavioral health and wellness practitioner program fills a critical gap by offering early, trauma-informed, family-centered support that traditional adult SUD treatment alone does not provide.

Oregon is facing a child and adolescent behavioral health crisis, with rising rates of anxiety, depression, trauma-related concerns, and insufficient access to early intervention services. More than half of families who seek youth behavioral health services in Oregon report difficulty accessing care.

This new workforce will work alongside existing mental health professionals and help close gaps that have left too many children and families waiting too long for support. It creates a well-prepared entry point into the workforce for people with bachelor's degrees and real-world, applied experience.

SB 1547 would strengthen and diversify Oregon's behavioral health workforce by creating a clear, realistic pathway for bachelor's-level graduates. It reduces unnecessary barriers to entry while keeping strong standards in place.

Please pass SB 1547.

Sincerely,

Elinka Dalhover
Regional Outreach Executive
Discover Recovery
Portland