

Submitter: Mysti Frost

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Judiciary

Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1583

Chair and Members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary,

I am writing in opposition to SB 1583. I am a full-time student at PSU getting my masters in social work and I work full-time as a peer support specialist at two different organizations in Eugene.

Substance use disorder and mental health challenges are wicked problem, meaning, they are complex, with no quick easy fixes. Over the past five years, under measure 110, It has taken an army of dedicated workers to build up these broken systems. Now, with this bill, all that work and effort will be destabilized and Oregonians will fall through the cracks.

Furthermore, placing our behavioral health in the hands of a committee operating under the criminal justice commission would have a negative impacts on black, indigenous, people of color, and those with disabilities. The criminal justice system uses tired punitive tactics to modify behavior and has a long road to go dismantling the structural racism and bias within. They are not ready.

It is my experience that when you treat people with dignity and empathy, trust in the process is established, and over time, recovery is possible. Peer support specialists play a significant role in that process. Peers not only model recovery, provide hope, and guide through structural barriers, peers establish safe and reliable relationships with service users, where the power dynamic is minimal, compare to other types of therapists or counselors. Peer relationships are often the catalyst, or the secret sauce, that is needed in behavioral health treatment, because lived experience matters, and is valuable!

This bill may significantly impact the way peer support specialists deliver services and would be a great loss in Oregon's fight to end these wicked problems. Oregonians would be better served by strengthening systems already put into place.

I urge you to oppose SB 1583.

Thank you for considering my testimony.

Yours very Truly,
Mysti Frost