

Submitter: Princess Bendjouya

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Judiciary

Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1583

Testimony Regarding SB 1583

To: Chair Prozanski, Vice-Chair Thatcher, and Members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary

From: Princess Bendjouya, Certified Recovery Mentor & Peer Support Specialist

Date: February 5, 2026

Opposition to SB 1583

Chair Prozanski and Members of the Committee,

My name is Princess, and I am a Certified Recovery Mentor and Peer Support Specialist working in Portland. I am writing today to express my strong opposition to SB 1583.

I speak to you not just as a professional, but as someone who has suffered from substance use disorder. I have been in abstinence for three years from fentanyl. My recovery journey began long before those three years, but I was only successful when I finally reached a place that practiced a health-first, trauma-informed harm reduction model. My substance use stemmed from self-medicating, and it was the consistency, trust, and "meeting me where I was" that allowed me to become the housed, gainfully employed, and productive member of the community I am today. I am deeply concerned that SB 1583, by moving oversight and funding toward the Criminal Justice Commission, will move support away from the health-based approach that saved my life. For many in our community, the justice system is a source of trauma, not healing.

As a Peer Support Specialist, I know that consistency and trust are the two most important pillars of recovery. When we move these programs into a "deflection" model governed by criminal justice entities, we risk:

Alienating the most vulnerable: Those suffering from deep-seated trauma are less likely to engage with systems tied to law enforcement.

Breaking trust: Peer support works because it is rooted in mutual understanding, not the threat of legal consequences.

Stigmatizing health issues: Substance use disorder is a health crisis, and it requires a health-based solution.

Moving support away from the health model would be detrimental to the success of my peers and my community. I implore you to vote against moving these resources to a criminal-legal oversight framework and instead keep our focus on the trauma-informed, health-based care that works.

Thank you for your time and for considering the voices of those with lived experience.

Sincerely,

Princess Bendjouya

Certified Recovery Mentor

New Avenues for Youth (THORN Program)