Submitter: Christina Underwood

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Early Childhood and Behavioral Health

Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1573

Hello Senate Leaders,

I am writing to you today as a rural Oregon resident and long-time community service provider, asking you to hear not only my voice but also the voices of many others who oppose Senate Bill 1573. While I recognize that the intent of this bill is to protect children and strengthen our communities, I respectfully urge you to look closely at the evidence and the real-world outcomes of policies that restrict harm reduction services.

Harm reduction is an evidence-based public health strategy proven to reduce the spread of HIV, hepatitis C, and injection-related illness and injury. For more than ten years, I have worked directly in this field and have witnessed firsthand the consequences when harm reduction access is limited. I have seen preventable wounds become severe infections, infections turn septic, and individuals contract lifelong conditions such as HIV—conditions that can cost the state upwards of $500,000 per person over the course of treatment. Beyond the financial cost, these are human lives, each person is loved, valued, and part of our shared community.

Harm reduction is not solely about people who inject drugs. It is a holistic, community-centered practice that improves public health and safety for everyone. As providers, we do not create the need; we respond to it. We go where people already are and work to reduce risk, connect individuals to care, and prevent greater harm. Our presence stabilizes communities rather than disrupts them.

I want to emphasize that we share the same goals: safer neighborhoods, healthier families, and protected children. We stand ready to work with you to develop solutions that truly serve the entire community, solutions grounded in data, compassion, and proven outcomes, without costing people their lives.

Thank you for your time your careful consideration.

In Solidarity,

Chris Underwood