

Honorable Mitch Greenlick, Chair  
Members of the House Committee on Health Care

Good Afternoon:

I wish to express my support for the concepts put forward in HB 2627. My name is Karen Wheeler and I am a Business Development Director for Greater Oregon Behavioral Health, Inc., headquartered in The Dalles. GOBHI is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation that is a National Committee for Quality Assurance accredited Managed Behavioral Healthcare Organization and is charged with administering all or part of the behavioral health Medicaid benefit in 17 rural and frontier counties in Oregon. GOBHI is a co-owner of the Eastern Oregon Coordinated Care Organization, and is responsible for the administration and oversight of behavioral health services for Columbia Pacific Coordinated Care Organization.

The SUD system has been traditionally under-funded over the past two decades, which limits opportunities for dramatic innovation or system changes. We are excited about the opportunity to expand capacity in the areas of recovery services, including recovery centers, that will offer new supports for people seeking to achieve and sustain long-term addiction recovery including recovery from opioid use disorders. The addiction crisis in Oregon cannot be managed by traditional, medical treatment alone.

Addiction has a major societal impact. Families are impacted in significant ways when a loved one experiences serious substance use disorders. Recovery centers offer a new model for families to access information and support along with their loved ones who need ongoing, life-saving hope for their future. 12-Step Programs are very useful and have their place in the community too, but recovery centers can offer more in the way of building recovery capital, teaching recovery skills, helping people have a voice and hope, and meeting people where they are, regardless of the chosen path to achieve long-term recovery.

Recovery centers are not just an urban phenomena. When visiting the state of Vermont around 10 years ago, I happened to be taking a walk and stumbled across a recovery center. There were posters about daily activities for a variety of age groups, inviting messages of hope, and an open door where I saw people talking, laughing, and enjoying the day. Since that day, I have been promoting this concept as a former state behavioral health administrator and now as a partner with Oregon

Recovers, because I truly believe this is one of the missing elements in our system of care. We should also explore telebehavioral health options and warm lines for delivery of this service to very remote populations.

This bill is a great start - please do not hesitate to contact me if I can be helpful to you in any way related to this bill.

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