



OREGON STATE SENATE

June 27, 2025

Vote Explanation for HB 2005

I carefully weighed HB 2005 before casting my vote. The decision was not an easy one. Thank you for allowing me to submit this vote explanation for the record.

I have fundamental concerns regarding the rights of individuals with disabilities, including those with psychiatric disabilities. Any provision that expands involuntary civil commitment is of significant concern. Too often, well intended efforts to assist those perceived as vulnerable involves actions that strip autonomy away from the people policies are intended to help. When it comes to civil commitment, it is sometimes difficult to find that line between life-saving help and inappropriate infringement on a person's individual rights.

I have heard the painful stories of too many constituents in my district in desperate need of help. Many desperately sought help they couldn't access, only to spiral further into crisis. They have family members doing everything they can to get help to their loved ones before it is too late. I've met grieving families who couldn't find help soon enough and others who watch loved ones filter through a criminal justice system that is not prepared or willing to support individuals with mental illness.

Over the top of all of this lays a scarcity of high quality, accessible and community-based services for children, youth and adults with mental illness. Coercion and control are not treatment, but many feel that is all that is offered to them. As a result, many are afraid to ask for help when they are still in a place to be able to receive it.

Lack of access, fear of losing control of one's life and distrust of a system that has failed them time and again result in pushing individuals into crisis before they can access services. This leaves many with the belief that only civil commitment can open the door to services. The truth is, even those under civil commitment languish waiting for services. Much of this is due to the same lack of community based mental health services that push individuals to crisis in the first place. If housing, follow up care and support is not available after a crisis is resolved, individuals are likely to fall back into crisis.

HB 2005, as many stated, is not a perfect bill. It does not solve all of these problems. However, it does contain a critical provision to improve service availability. It will break the dam of resistance to siting community based residential treatment homes and crisis centers across the state. Greater access to community-based treatment and crisis response will ultimately reduce the need for civil commitment and improve the lives of individuals. The process leading to this bill was different than those of the past. It included many interested parties, including Disability Rights Oregon. Even though the bill didn't result in support from disability led organizations, the content of the bill is different because these voices were at least invited to the table. We see those changes in the removal of stigmatizing language, the high "clear and convincing" standard for civil commitment and the requirement to NOT impose a civil commitment if the person is able to access services without that measure.

I remain uncomfortable, on principle, with the inequity of a policy that allows civil commitment only for people with disabilities, and not for nondisabled people who pose a danger to self or others. However, I also know that we are currently failing people who need access to services and that until we build services that people want to access and can access, the pressure to utilize civil commitment will continue.

Despite significant reservations, I voted YES on HB 2005. The bill will spur creation of services that are desperately needed by Oregonians. These are services that can be accessed voluntarily, ultimately reducing the need for civil commitment.

Despite that vote, I want to be clear:

- No one should have to give up their rights to access services.
- People with disabilities are not inherently dangerous or inherently unable to manage their own lives.
- Civil Commitment is a service to support individuals with complex needs in an emergency. It is not, and never should be, a tool for the criminal justice system.
- Further work on this issue must be person centered, focused on community-based solutions and include prevention and trauma responsive services for the youngest Oregonians.
- It isn't enough for people with disabilities to be invited to provide input or sit at a table for policy debates that impact their lives in the most intimate of ways. Instead, disabled people must always be leading this work as thought leaders with respect given to the expertise that comes only from lived experience.

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