



SENATOR DANIEL BONHAM PRESS RELEASE

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Senate Passes Bonham Bill to Address Urgent Mental Health and Substance Use Needs Through OSU Extension

SALEM, Ore. – Today, the Oregon Senate passed [Senate Bill 920](#), introduced by **Senator Daniel Bonham (R-The Dalles)**, to strengthen the behavioral health system across Oregon through the trusted **Oregon State University (OSU) Extension Service**.

SB 920 directs the OSU Extension Family and Community Health Program, known as Health Extension, to convene local behavioral health committees and facilitate **Community Conversations about Mental Health**—a proven framework that helps Oregonians come together to identify local needs related to mental health and substance use, and to craft real, actionable solutions.

“Too many Oregonians are struggling with mental health challenges or substance use, and they feel like no one is listening,” said **Senator Bonham**. “This bill is about changing that. It creates space for real conversations, guided by local voices and rooted in the community, so people can be heard and supported. I’m proud to partner with OSU Extension to help bring people together and move toward solutions that reflect the unique needs of each region.”

OSU Extension has a decades-long track record of innovation and partnership with rural communities, especially through programs like Coast to Forest, Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance, and the AgriStress Helpline. These efforts have already saved lives and expanded access to behavioral health services in areas where they’re most needed.

The Community Conversations framework has already helped Oregon communities:

- Improve understanding of local mental health needs and gaps in services.
- Strengthen collaboration among local agencies, nonprofits, and residents.
- Develop locally led action plans to improve prevention, treatment, and recovery.
- Launch new youth mentorship programs and establish safe community spaces.
- Create interagency task forces and new systems for coordination.
- Successfully secure grants for community-driven behavioral health projects.

SB 920 builds on that success by providing funding to allow **Columbia, Malheur, Tillamook, Umatilla, and Union counties** to participate in the initiative. The bill now moves to the House of Representatives for consideration.

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