

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

October 9, 2024

The Honorable Rob Wagner
President of the Senate
S-201 State Capitol
Salem, OR 97301

The Honorable Julie Fahey
Speaker of the House
H-269 State Capitol
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Speaker Fahey and President Wagner,

As you may be aware, I recently concluded a county-by-county listening tour to hear directly from local law enforcement, elected officials, and community advocates about what resources and support they need to chart a successful path forward following the repeal of Measure 110. I met with leaders in every county in the 6th congressional district - Polk, Yamhill, Marion, Clackamas, and Washington - and the feedback I received was invaluable.

I am currently working to turn this feedback into federal solutions. For example, I am developing legislation to fund additional capacity for crisis stabilization centers and in-patient recovery facilities, which was a repeated issue and topic of discussion during my listening tour. The discussions also brought to light the need for coordinated collaboration and partnership at all levels of government in order to be truly effective in addressing the ongoing fentanyl and addiction crisis in Oregon. With this in mind, I would like to share with you some of what I heard and offer my full commitment to partnering with you to address this crisis and move our state forward.

One point of frustration I repeatedly heard was that, while counties appreciate the autonomy H.B. 4002 granted to them to set up their own deflection programs, they felt somewhat excluded from the development of this legislation. As a result, I am concerned that the varied nature of these deflection programs could lead to confusion and inconsistent standards of quality across jurisdictions. Of course, counties are free to choose not to establish deflection programs. I request that you prioritize working with counties that do establish deflection programs to help them adhere to the requirements set forth in H.B. 4002 and ensure the various programs are generally equitable.

The persistent lack of trained mental and behavioral health professionals and addiction specialists could hamper the implementation of deflection programs and undermine progress toward achieving our overarching goal of dramatically reducing drug usage and overdoses in Oregon. I recently introduced bipartisan legislation that would grow our country's mental and behavioral health addiction treatment workforce by providing scholarships to support individuals who are pursuing a degree in these fields. This legislation will make these professions more affordable and accessible to students and reduce our health care workforce shortage in Oregon. However, we also need to invest in our institutions of higher education to expand and improve

our graduate mental and behavioral health fields. It is crucial that we reduce the bottleneck of qualified students compared to program capacity and ensure more students can graduate from programs within or near the communities they will serve.

I want to express my appreciation for your targeted and aggressive approach to tackling Oregon's ongoing housing crisis by passing the \$376 million housing package earlier this year. Congress should follow your example by passing legislation that stabilizes rent prices and delivers additional resources for shelters, while also prioritizing the construction of additional units. This multi-pronged approach will help slow rent increases and keep people off the streets today, while also building more housing and can continue to meet demand well into the future. At the federal level, I will continue to prioritize affordable housing initiatives through Community Project Funding requests and fight back against attempts to cut critical programs like the HOME Investment Partnerships Program. Furthermore, I will continue to advocate for common sense legislation like the *Affordable Housing Credit Improvement Act*, which would help finance the construction of over 2 million affordable housing units across the country.

I hope you will consider me a partner as we move forward with life after Measure 110. There are multiple federal grants that I will work with my colleagues in Congress to increase overall funding for, including the Substance Use and Mental Health Block Grant, Grants to Expand Substance Use Disorder Treatment Capacity in Adult and Family Treatment Drug Courts, and Grants for Treatment of Pregnant and Postpartum Women. In addition to increasing funding for these programs, I will work with you and Governor Kotek to identify grants where I can offer letters of support and put pressure on the appropriate agency to recognize the severity of our addiction and housing crises.

As you approach the 2025 Legislative Session, I hope this feedback I heard from stakeholders and community members across Oregon's Sixth Congressional District can inform bipartisan, pragmatic solutions. I am optimistic that we will be successful in our fight against drug addiction and homelessness if we continue to work together. I look forward to collaborating with you to improve the lives of all Oregonians.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andrea Salinas". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Andrea" and last name "Salinas" clearly legible.

Andrea Salinas
Member of Congress

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