



November 3, 2020

The Honorable Kate Brown
Governor of Oregon
The State Capitol
900 Court Street, NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

Dear Governor Brown,

We understand that you're hearing from the alcohol industry regarding your proposed beer and wine tax legislation for the 2021 session. We are writing to make clear that our organizations wholly support prioritizing the health and wellness of our communities by raising the price of alcohol and using that revenue to make significant investments in addiction prevention, treatment and recovery services.

In the last twenty years [Oregon's alcohol mortality rate has increased 34%, leading to five deaths per day resulting from alcohol](#), while Oregon's beer and wine industries have enjoyed some of the lowest taxes in the nation. The economic cost of this crisis is staggering. The Alcohol and Drug Policy Commission's Statewide Strategic Plan calculated that Oregon is spending an estimated [\\$6.7 billion per year](#) on issues related to substance misuse, the majority of which is a result of harmful alcohol use. State spending on substance use has quadrupled since 2005 and consumed [nearly 17% of the state budget in 2017, however less than 1% of those funds are used to prevent, treat and support the recovery of people with substance use disorder](#). For far too long, Oregon has ranked as one of the worst states in the nation in addressing the disease of addiction, and the absence of adequate funding and attention to this crisis has put an undue financial burden on our healthcare, public safety and criminal justice workforces.

[Raising alcohol prices is a proven public health method](#) to reduce excessive alcohol use, underage drinking and alcohol-related mortality. Additionally, creating new, dedicated funding streams for our overburdened and chronically under-resourced prevention, substance use disorder treatment, and recovery support service providers will help our state respond effectively, despite the looming budget crisis.

Untreated addiction disproportionately impacts communities of color and these same communities see the lowest rates of treatment accessibility in Oregon. Addiction also plays an outsized contributing role in Oregon's foster care rate, homelessness crisis, and mental health crisis. By prioritizing the sensible and pragmatic step of reducing the subsidy the alcohol industry enjoys to better fund the needs of our most vulnerable, you will also be making strides in addressing these other long simmering, complex social problems.

Lastly, a [study in Preventive Medicine](#) indicates that increased alcohol taxes actually have a net-positive effect on job growth in states that adopt them. Raising alcohol taxes and dedicating the

revenue to substance abuse prevention and treatment will result in a net job increase because businesses will benefit from increased productivity and lower turnover when alcohol and other substance use declines.

We applaud your leadership on this issue, and you have our support in increasing alcohol taxes to prevent and treat the disease of addiction.

Respectfully,

4th Dimension Recovery Centers

Oregon Council for Behavioral Health

Alliance4Kids

Oregon Nurses Association

Central City Concern

Oregon Recovers

*Mental Health and Addictions Certification
Board of Oregon and its 10,000+ Members*

Oregon Society of Addiction Medicine

Mental Health Association of Portland

Springfield Treatment Center

Tax Fairness Oregon