

Co-Chair Frederick, Co-Chair McLain, and members of the committee,

My name is Tom Peckenhams-Hernandez and I am part of the Scholars for a Healthy Oregon Initiative (SHOI). SHOI is an OHSU program that offers full tuition and fees to a select number of students in exchange for at least five years of medical service in a rural or underserved part of Oregon.

I grew up speaking Spanish and translating for my father from Central America. I experienced how language and literacy can prevent high quality healthcare. I'm the first person in my family to enter medicine and could not have accessed higher education without SHOI. I am planning to practice medicine in a critical access hospital in Oregon. Without SHOI I would not have had the financial ability to pursue rural, underserved healthcare in Oregon.

Rural and underserved areas lack access to care, and without the SHOI program, it would be nearly impossible for underpopulated and underserved areas to attract talented doctors. Coupled with the cost of medical school and the sometimes lower pay in these areas, taking jobs in rural or underserved areas without financial assistance would result in significant debt for providers. There are hundreds of qualified Oregonians who are willing to serve in rural and underserved Oregon, but if the funding for SHOI is cut, then we know that these areas of our state will feel the effects. As we begin our road to recovery from the pandemic, we cannot afford to leave underserved populations behind.

We urge you to fully fund the Scholars for a Healthy Oregon Initiative so we can continue to serve some of the communities that need it the most.

Sincerely,

Tom Peckenhams-Hernandez PA-S 2021