

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

My name is Derek Wiseman 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 am from the rural community of Klamath Falls, OR. I come from humble beginnings and have seen the impacts of rural healthcare shortages firsthand. When I made the decision to pursue a career in healthcare I knew that rural was where I wanted to practice. I wanted to work where the need was high and I could make the most impact. Though I felt my calling to rural medicine, I wasn't sure exactly how to pay for medical school and this was a great concern for me. During my interview day at OHSU School of Medicine I was told about SHOI and encouraged to apply. SHOI opens huge doors for students like me who are wanting to work rural but don't have strong financial support. I knew from day 1 that after graduating medical school and completing residency I was going to return to rural Oregon to practice. This insight is so powerful. It framed my thinking throughout medical school and framed my residency choice. Attending medical school at a resource rich academic center provided great learning, but I constantly thought of, and asked questions about, those in rural areas and how they might handle similar problems with less resources. I matched into a rural residency program at Cascades East Family Medicine to further my knowledge of rural medical care in a rural setting. 3 years from now I will be employed in a rural community fulfilling my end of the agreement I made with SHOI, and I couldn't be more excited about my future.

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,

Derek Wiseman, MD
OHSU Class of 2021