

Submitter: Eve Gray

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Behavioral Health and Health Care

Measure: HB2485

I am writing in support of HB 2485. I am the Director of Health and Human Services for Lane County. Lane County runs a large behavioral health program with around 50 Qualified Mental Health Providers, as well as a group of Qualified Mental Health Associates and peers. We run a medication-assisted treatment program that houses addiction specialists, including physicians and licensed counselors. We also are the Community Mental Health Provider for Lane County and hold over 130 contracts with local non-profits to provide mental health services in our community with passthrough funds from the CFAA.

The need for additional behavioral health staff in our community is dire. All agencies we work with have openings for behavioral health professionals. Though recruitment bonuses have been helpful, they at times have led to us pulling staff from other local agencies rather than materially increasing the behavioral health workforce in Lane County. Only through investing in the capacity of behavioral health education programs, and reducing the barriers to entry into the profession, will we be able to substantially decrease the scope of the crisis we face.

HB 2485 supports expansion of social work and alcohol/drug addiction programs at PSU. This is the type of investment that will help increase the behavioral health workforce in Oregon, and I fully support the expansion of PSU programming. Two friendly suggestions for this legislation include a request that PSU not just expand programming in the Portland area, but also create online or distance programming that will help other areas of the state. They are already leaders in this area, so it should fit in well with their vision and direction. I also am becoming increasingly supportive of extending tuition and internship supports not to all students, but to those who agree to work for at least 5 years for a safety net provider (defined by a provider serving >50% Medicaid or that receives funding through the CFAA for indigent care). We do not need to pay taxpayer dollars for more folks to go into private practice, but we do need extensive support for those willing to serve the highest need populations.

Thank you for your support of this bill.