



Oregon Commission on Black Affairs

Advocating for Equity and Diversity throughout Oregon

Dear Chair Nosse, Vice Chairs Goodwin and Nelson, and Members of the House Committee on Behavioral Health and Healthcare,

For the record, my name is Liz Foucher-Branch, I serve on the Oregon Commission on Black Affairs (OCBA). We serve the people of Oregon to empower and support the African American and Black community through our unique roles as policy advisors to Oregon state policymakers and leaders. The OCBA is a catalyst that allows partnerships between the state government and our community in rural and urban areas to ensure success for all African American and Black Oregonians by addressing longstanding and emerging issues at the policy level. I am writing today in support of House Bill 2485.

As a retired teacher with degrees in education from the University of Oregon and Portland State University who has worked with families living in poverty, impacted by homelessness, abandonment, and abuse, I recognized the need to supply Oregon families with a continuum of services that include social workers specifically trained in mental health and addiction services. HB 2485 will help to address those needs while enhancing Portland State's Social Work program.

Speaking from personal experience, Educators often work hand in hand with social workers, mental health specialists, and, when appropriate, addiction service providers to support their students and families across the state. An investment in Portland State University's Social work program with a focus on mental health and addiction services at a time when that state is recovering from a global health crisis, our families are struggling with living in poverty, domestic violence, and addiction is absolutely critical.

HB 2485 shows the need for reinvestments like this that allow Oregonian taxpayers to strengthen services in mental health, advocacy, and programming but also help address the need for a culturally competent and highly qualified workforce.

I urge members of the committee to support its passage.

Liz Foucher-Branch

Oregon Commission on Black Affairs

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