

Dear Oregon Legislators:

On behalf the **nationally-scaled Rural Training Track Collaborative (RTT Collaborative)**, we urge you to support SB 490, which will fund the Oregon Residency Collaborative Alliance for Family Medicine. As a nationally scaled nonprofit that is the premier organizational nationally focused on the expansion of rural graduate medical education and health professions training programs, The RTT recognizes critical need to strengthen Oregon’s primary care workforce. More than two million Oregonians live in places without enough access to health care. A 2020 study from OHSU highlighted inequitable access to primary care for Medicaid patients in rural Oregon, yet in fall 2022 Portland’s wait time to see a primary care physician were the worst in the country at 44 days.<sup>1,2</sup>

Currently, **Oregon graduates just 36 family physicians per year from eight residency sites around the state**, five of which are rural, but that capacity is growing, and Oregon must support it. Expanded opportunity for excellent resident education is shown to have an amplifying effect on physician retention.<sup>3</sup> A study on the health of US primary care released last week by the Milbank Memorial Fund cited a shrinking primary care workforce as a key driver of the widening gap in access to care<sup>4</sup>. It also highlighted the need to ensure that more physicians are trained in the communities where the need is greatest.

The faculty and staff of these residency sites require the support of a robust collaborative to deliver an outstanding education. Shared faculty development opportunities, distributed


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<sup>1</sup> McConnell, K.J., Charlesworth, C.J., Zhu, J.M. *et al.* Access to Primary, Mental Health, and Specialty Care: a Comparison of Medicaid and Commercially Insured Populations in Oregon. *J GEN INTERN MED* 35, 247–254 (2020). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11606-019-05439-z>

<sup>2</sup> Payerchin, Richard. “Appointment Wait Times Drop for Family Physicians, Indicating Shift in Care.” [www.medicaleconomics.com](http://www.medicaleconomics.com), Medical Economics , 13 Sept. 2022, <https://www.medicaleconomics.com/view/appointment-wait-times-drop-for-family-physicians-indicating-shift-in-care>.

<sup>3</sup> Bazemore A. Homegrown = Home-Served: The Power of Local Training. *J Grad Med Educ.* 2016 Oct;8(4):609–612. doi: 10.4300/JGME-D-16-00388.1. PMID: 27777678; PMCID: PMC5058600.

<sup>4</sup> Jabbarpour Y., Petterson S., Jetty A., Byun H., The Health of US Primary Care: A Baseline Scorecard Tracking Support for High-Quality Primary Care, The Milbank Memorial Fund and The Physicians Foundation. February 22, 2023.

 (815) 871 - 4692

 [rttc1@rttcollaborative.net](mailto:rttc1@rttcollaborative.net)

 1601 Parkview Avenue, Rockford, IL 61107

 <https://rttcollaborative.net/>



**The RTT Collaborative**  
in rural health professions education and training  
*Growing our own...together*


research opportunities, and shared curriculum development helps to ensure their longevity and success.

The factors driving our workforce crisis are multifaceted and resolving them requires collaboration across sectors and institutions. ORCA-FM, which provides resources to help ensure the success of Oregon's current training sites and of additional sites to come, is a critical part of the solution.

*Hana Hinkle*

**Hana Hinkle, PhD MPH**

*Executive Director*

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