

**Testimony to the Joint Committee on Ways and Means
Public Hearing – SB 5506
Jacoby Auditorium – Umpqua Community College
April 21, 2023**

Linda Samek, President, Southern Oregon Medical Workforce Center

I am Linda Samek, President of the Southern Oregon Medical Workforce Center (SOMWC) in Roseburg. As I was not called to testify at the public hearing at UCC, I am submitting my testimony electronically. I have been involved with this project since fall of 2018 when I was Provost at George Fox University, and we were considering a significant role as an academic partner in this project.

After retiring from George Fox in 2020, I was invited to take on the role of President of the SOMWC, a role I was happy to assume. My major responsibility at this time is to recruit and develop Memorandums of Understanding with academic partners who will provide educational opportunities for healthcare and mental health professionals in Southwest Oregon. Because most of this enterprise currently occurs in the Portland and Salem metro areas, rural Oregon is often ignored when shortages in these fields are targeted to be addressed. Please refer to the testimony of Kelly Morgan, CEO of Mercy Medical Center in Roseburg for more information.

As I am sure you are aware, much of higher education suffers from the same maladies as the healthcare and mental health industries, shortages of personnel, financial resources, and sometimes public respect. Finding appropriate and excellent academic partners for the SOMWC has been challenging. We constantly run into barriers of time, startup funding, and personnel availability. In order to ensure high quality programs to serve rural Oregon, we are asking for funding to provide much needed start up resources for programs such as nursing, social work, medical imaging, physical and occupational therapy, and other professions that are much needed in most of rural Oregon.

If we can launch a successful model in Roseburg for the education of healthcare and mental health professionals in rural Southwest Oregon, we believe we can scale these critical services to other parts of rural Oregon and beyond.

We would appreciate your support in bringing this project that is critical to the health and wellbeing of rural Oregonians to full fruition. Thank you!