

**TAWNA SANCHEZ**  
**STATE REPRESENTATIVE**  
DISTRICT 43  
NORTH AND NORTHEAST PORTLAND



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

May 2, 2023

Dear Chair Patterson, Vice-Chair Hayden, and Members of the Senate Healthcare Committee,

My name is Tawna Sanchez and I am the State Representative for House District 43, North and Northeast Portland. I am writing in support of HB 2235, which would require the Oregon Health Authority to form a work group to study barriers to recruitment and retention in our state's behavioral healthcare workforce.

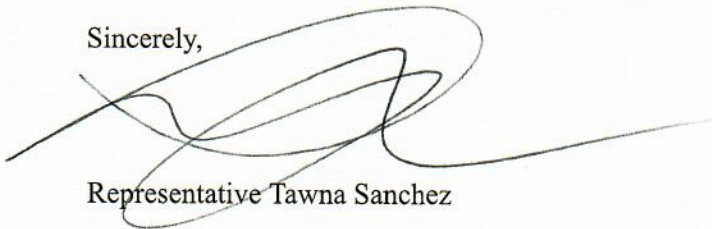
Oregon's behavioral healthcare system is in crisis. Behavioral healthcare workers are overworked, underpaid, and leaving the profession at an alarming rate. As a social worker, I am acutely aware of the stresses inherent to this work. Enormous caseloads and insufficient facilities have left us burnt out and unable to adequately serve our clients. Wages for public behavioral health workers lag far behind those in the private sector, and bottlenecks force many providers to turn away desperate patients. These issues are particularly pronounced in rural and underserved areas of the state, where behavioral health infrastructure cannot sufficiently address local needs.

HB 2235 would convene a work group of behavioral healthcare workers, providers, and community care organizations to address these problems. This group would develop recommendations to improve recruitment and retention of the behavioral health workforce and reduce administrative burden on behavioral healthcare providers. While the Oregon legislature has taken steps to address wages and workforce development needs, we must now address burnout and high turnover. Without our support, behavioral health workers will continue to leave the profession, and our communities will continue to suffer as a result.

HB 2235 does not establish a caseload standard for behavioral health workers. It simply begins to identify how we can strategically invest in community behavioral health services moving forward. By bringing together frontline workers, certified practitioners, and administrators, HB 2235 takes necessary steps to protect our workforce and ensure that all Oregonians have access to quality behavioral healthcare.

I urge you to support HB 2235 and pass it out of committee with a "Do Pass" recommendation.

Sincerely,



Representative Tawna Sanchez