

Submitter: Devon Lawson-McCourt  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: Senate Committee On Education  
Measure: SB1592

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing in strong support of SB 1592, a critical piece of legislation designed to address the pressing need to expand and bolster the behavioral health workforce in Oregon. As a proponent of progressive values, I believe in the power of collective action and the responsibility of the state to ensure the well-being of its citizens. This bill represents a pivotal step towards fulfilling that duty by making a strategic investment in our state's future health and prosperity.

The mental health crisis in our society is not just a health issue; it's a reflection of the systemic inequalities and stresses that plague our communities. From economic disparities to social isolation, the challenges facing individuals today are immense and often insurmountable without professional support. Yet, the stark reality is that Oregon, like much of the nation, faces a significant shortage of behavioral health professionals. This shortage limits access to vital mental health services, exacerbating the suffering of our most vulnerable populations and contributing to a cycle of social and economic despair.

SB 1592 offers a beacon of hope. By appropriating funds from the General Fund to the Higher Education Coordinating Commission for distribution to certain institutions of higher education, this bill directly invests in the education and training of a new generation of behavioral health professionals. This is not merely a funding initiative; it is a commitment to creating a more equitable, healthy, and resilient society. It recognizes that access to mental health services is a fundamental right, not a privilege, and seeks to democratize this access by expanding the workforce necessary to meet the demand.

I argue that the government has a paramount role in redistributing resources to serve the public good and tackle the systemic issues facing our society. SB 1592 embodies this principle by using public funds to address a public health crisis, thereby laying the groundwork for a more just and equitable Oregon. By investing in our behavioral health workforce, we are not only addressing the immediate needs of our communities but also investing in the long-term sustainability of our health care system and the overall well-being of our society.

Moreover, this bill has the potential to stimulate economic growth and job creation in the health care sector, providing opportunities for many who are seeking meaningful, stable employment in a field that has the power to transform lives. It also represents

a step towards reducing the stigma surrounding mental health by normalizing and prioritizing mental health care as a critical component of our overall health care system.

In conclusion, SB 1592 is more than a piece of legislation; it is a moral imperative. It reflects our collective values and aspirations for a society that cares for all its members, particularly the most vulnerable. I urge you to support this bill wholeheartedly, as it paves the way for a healthier, more equitable, and prosperous Oregon.

Sincerely,  
Devon Lawson-McCourt  
Associated Student Body Business Manager  
11th Grade Class Treasurer