



CITY OF
PORTLAND, OREGON

Ted Wheeler, Mayor
Carmen Rubio, Commissioner
Dan Ryan, Commissioner
Rene Gonzalez, Commissioner
Mingus Mapps, Commissioner

February 12, 2024

House Committee on Behavioral Health and Health Care
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court Street SE
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Chair Nosse, Vice Chairs Nelson and Goodwin, and members of the committee,

We write today to share our support for House Bill 4071, issuing temporary licensure to qualified health care providers. We are specifically interested in HB 4071's ability to increase the number of behavioral healthcare providers required to meet the needs of Portlanders.

There is a crisis occurring on Portland's streets. Too many of our citizens experiencing serious mental health and substance use disorders are unable to access appropriate behavioral health care. Instead, they are boarding in hospital emergency departments, living on our streets, cycling in and out of the criminal justice system, or some combination of the three. Decades of underfunding the behavioral health system, and the rise of cheaper and more addictive illegal drugs have resulted in significant numbers of Portlanders in need of stabilization and treatment without a place to turn.

As the City works to address the systemic problem of homelessness, it's vital that individuals with acute behavioral health needs currently living on Portland's streets can access appropriate care—whether that be in a residential treatment facility, stabilization center, or through community-based services. And we have heard from our behavioral health partners that one of the many barriers to achieving that goal is a lack of licensed providers available to staff these facilities and provide much needed care. It is important that as the legislature considers investments into recruiting, training, and retaining the state's behavioral health workforce, that additional steps are taken to ensure that these providers can receive licensure in a timely manner.

Thank you again for the opportunity to share our support for increasing the number of behavioral health care workers in Oregon. We urge passage of HB 4071.

Sincerely,

Ted Wheeler
Mayor

Carmen Rubio
Commissioner

Dan Ryan
Commissioner

Mingus Mapps
Commissioner

Rene Gonzalez
Commissioner

