



February 14, 2024

TO: Chair Patterson, members of the Senate Committee on Health Care

FROM: Association of Oregon Counties Legislative Affairs Manager, Jessica Pratt

RE: Support SB 1594-3

Dear Chair Patterson and members of the committee,

On behalf of the Association of Oregon Counties, representing Oregon's county governments, I am writing to urge your support for SB 1594-3, to improve the safety of our local behavioral health workforce and to increase the behavioral health care workforce in this state.

Oregon counties are experiencing high vacancy rates for critical behavioral health professionals across the local continuum of care. Some positions have been open for years, particularly in rural communities. At the same time, our local behavioral health program staff are now caring for people in the community with much higher levels of distress than ever before.

SB 1594-3 will convene a taskforce with a dedicated seat for county government to create recommendations for worker safety and will fund enhanced employer-based apprenticeship and training opportunities to grow a local behavioral health workforce with strong roots in their communities. This bill is a valuable piece of a multi-pronged strategy to attract and grow the local public and behavioral health workforce.

AOC urges your support for SB 1594-3 and we thank you for your support for state-county shared services.

Jessica Pratt
Legislative Affairs Manager
Association of Oregon Counties