



SB 161: Career Centered Pathways in Public Health
Senate Health Care
January 28, 2025

Chair Patterson, Vice Chair Hayden, and members of the committee:

My name is Madison Riethman, and for the past 2.5 years, I have overseen a federal grant for CLHO, which we've dubbed the Healthy Rural Oregon project. I want to share a bit about Healthy Rural Oregon, the impact we've been able to have, and how Senate Bill 161 can help build on its work.

Thanks to this \$1.5 million federal grant, Healthy Rural Oregon has had a tremendous impact on workforce development in Oregon's public and community health sectors. The program has helped address pressing workforce needs by providing nearly 400 individuals with scholarships for training in 65 different programs— programs identified through close collaboration with local partners to identify specific area needs. Our sponsored trainings include certificate courses in critical fields like Community Health Workers and Peer Support Specialists; EMTs and paramedics; Nursing, Medical, and Dental Assistants, and more. We've also supported skills-specific continuing education in topic areas such as behavioral and mental health, birth and postpartum support, and end-of-life care. Our trainees now work in a variety of health-related settings, from local public health departments to hospitals, clinics, EMS agencies, and community-based organizations.

Beyond scholarships, we have also worked to remove barriers to success for our trainees by providing financial and one-on-one support for things like travel, technology, childcare, licensing fees, and more. This support ensures that individuals can fully participate in their training programs and take the next step in their professional development, no matter their circumstances.

We've also focused on expanding access to training across Oregon, particularly in areas where needed training opportunities have been harder to come by. This includes the development of new training programs in counties including Klamath, Malheur, Marion/Polk and Hood River/Wasco. Additionally, in partnership with Central Oregon Community College, we've created the OregonLearns platform, which offers free, Oregon-specific continuing education for public health professionals statewide. We've also supported the Oregon Office of Rural Health in launching their Rural Oregon CHW network, a peer-to-peer program that fosters collaboration across rural communities.

While these efforts have been incredibly impactful, the Healthy Rural Oregon grant is set to expire in July 2025. Due to diminishing funds and to our rural service area limits, we've already





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had to turn away individuals seeking assistance with training needs. And once this grant period ends, there will be limited resources to continue providing scholarships, workforce development, and barrier removal support for these essential professionals.

This is where Senate Bill 161 comes in. SB 161 will allocate funds to three statewide organizations that are uniquely positioned to continue driving workforce development for these critical frontline workers and expand this work to include both urban and rural communities statewide. These organizations have the infrastructure and knowledge to keep building on the momentum we've gained and expand, ensuring a sustainable future for Oregon's public health workforce.

Thank you!

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