

Support for SB 595

The Oregon Behavioral Health Independent Providers Association includes four agencies, all of which provide direct services through Oregon Department of Human Services (ODHS) contracts. This includes:

- Options Counseling and Family Services provides mental health, psychiatry, parenting support, case management, and family stabilization services in fourteen Oregon counties throughout Western Oregon.
- Bridgeway Community Health offers outpatient and residential treatment for substance use and gambling, housing support, and physical and behavioral health interventions.
- Catholic Community Services delivers affordable housing with wraparound services, support for youth and families experiencing psychiatric crises, pregnancy and support services, and outpatient mental health counseling.
- Valley Mental health offers outpatient mental health therapy, case management, and psychiatric care in Marion and Polk counties.

While costs for mileage, rent, employee benefits, and wages have risen, ODHS contracts remain stubbornly constant through their five-year terms. Without cost-of-living increases built into the contracts, our agencies struggle to recruit and retain team members who deliver critical services to children, youth, adults, and families referred through the ODHS.

As an example, a starting salary of \$40,000 offered in 2020, would need to be adjusted to \$48,777.55¹ in 2025 to maintain the same earning power; that represents a cumulative increase of nearly 22%. Similarly, in 2020, the federal rate for mileage reimbursement was 57.5 cents per mile; it is currently 70 cents per mile². As many ODHS services are delivered in families' homes and communities, this represents a significant cost increase for agencies serving ODHS children, youth, adults, and families without a commensurate increase in funding.

Individuals working in agency settings are subject to the consequences of inflation that public and private sector employees experience. However, cost-of-living and step increases are regularly offered outside of non-profit settings. As a result, those of us serving some of the most vulnerable Oregonians are struggling to support livable wages and comprehensive benefits for our team members.

Please make a clear statement that values these workers and those they serve by supporting this bill. This is deep heart work that shouldn't come at the expense of wage stagnation.

With appreciation,

Camille Soleil, Board Chair, Valley Mental Health
Tim Murphy, Board Vice Chair, Bridgeway Community Health
Josh Graves, Board Treasury, Catholic Community Services
Kelli McKnight, Board Secretary, Options Counseling and Family Services

¹ <https://www.in2013dollars.com/us/inflation/2020?amount=40000>

² <https://www.irs.gov/tax-professionals/standard-mileage-rates>