



Oregon Office of Rural Health

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January 30, 2025

Chair Patterson, Vice Chair Hayden, Members of the Committee.

My name is Robert Duehmig, I am the Director of the Oregon Office of Rural Health (ORH). The ORH serves rural Oregon in several ways. We have a workforce team that includes a full-time provider recruiter, working with rural practice sites to develop recruitment and marketing strategies, manages the state 3Rnet site, a national jobs board promoting rural Oregon health care jobs nationwide. She also works with students at OHSU, CompNW, Pacific Universities as well as other students that are interested in working rural Oregon. The office administers various provider incentive programs, including the Behavioral Health Loan Repayment program, the Oregon Health Care Provider Loan Repayment program, Oregon Partnership State Loan Repayment Program (federal) and two loan forgiveness programs: Primary Care Loan Forgiveness (PCLF) program and the Scholars for a Healthy Oregon (SHOI) program. Additionally, we administer the Rural Practitioners Insurance Subsidy Program and two tax credits: Rural Practitioner and Rural Volunteer EMS.

As you might imagine, there are many definitions for rural. The federal government has four primary definitions:

US Census Bureau:

Areas that contain at least 2,000 housing units or have a population of at least 5,000.

Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs):

Metropolitan Statistical Area

A Core Based Statistical Area associated with at least one Urban Area that has a population of at least 50,000. The MSA comprises the central county or counties containing the core, plus adjacent outlying counties having a high degree of social and economic integration with the central county or counties as measured through commuting.

Micropolitan Statistical Areas

A Core Based Statistical Area associated with at least one Urban Area that has a population of at least 10,000, but less than 50,000. The μ SA comprises the central county or counties containing the core, plus adjacent outlying counties having a high degree of social and economic integration with the central county or counties as measured through commuting.

Rural-Urban Community Areas (RUCAs):

- Metro area Core (>50,000)
- Metro area, high commute
- Metro area, low commute
- Large town Core (10,000-49,999)
- Large town, high commute
- Large town, low commute
- Small town core (2,500-9,999)
- Small town, high commute
- Small town, low commute
- Rural area (<2,500)

USDA Frontier and Remote Area Codes (FAR)

FAR level one: ZIP code areas with majority populations living 60 minutes or more from urban areas of 50,000 or more.

FAR level two: ZIP code areas with majority populations living 60 minutes or more from urban areas of 50,000 or more people and 45 minutes or more from urban areas of 25,000-49,999 people.

FAR level three: ZIP code areas with majority populations living 60 minutes or more from urban areas of 50,000 or more people; and 45 minutes or more from urban areas of 25,000-49,999 people; and 30 minutes or more from urban areas of 10,000- 24,999 people.

FAR level four: ZIP code areas with majority populations living 60 minutes or more from urban areas of 50,000 or more people; and 45 minutes or more from urban areas of 25,000-49,999 people; and 30 minutes or more from urban areas of 10,000- 24,999 people; and 15 minutes or more from urban areas of 2,500-9,999 people.

The ORH defines **rural** as any geographic areas in Oregon ten or more miles from the centroid of a population center of 40,000 people or more. **Frontier/remote** are defined as any county with six or fewer people per square mile. ORH has identified 10 of Oregon's 36 counties as frontier/remote. Those counties are Baker, Gilliam, Grant, Harney, Lake, Malheur, Morrow, Sherman, Wallowa and Wheeler. This definition has been developed using a combination of population and distance to ensure that programs are reaching areas that are rural/frontier-remote.

ORH uses population numbers from the [Population Research Center at Portland State University](#) for incorporated cities and counties, and numbers from Claritas for Oregon Zip Codes.

Using 2024 Claritas data, 33% (1,403,688) of Oregon's population lives in rural areas, 2% (97,666) in frontier, and 65% (2,772,488) in urban areas. I have included a map of the state showing current urban/rural/remote-frontier.

SB 376 would define "rural" as a geographical region with a population of not more than 1.25 percent of the total population of this state. The definition does not take into account

any distances between locations. As written, we would not be able to make a determination of the impact of this change on provider incentives or other programs administered by our office. There is no current definition of the term “geographic region”. Depending on how this term is defined, we would likely fall back on using city boundaries, which could bring in areas that are not currently considered rural.

The 2024 population of Oregon, according to PSU, is 4,263,385 and 1.25% of that is 53,292. Under SB 376, this could bring in all areas that have a population less than that, which includes Lake Oswego, Oregon City, Milwaukie, Keizer, Tualatin, West Linn and Forest Grove as well as other areas that are next to cities of 53,292 or more.

ORH believes it is important to maintain a definition of rural that will allow provider incentives, as well as other program, to reach the rural communities that need this support.

I am happy to take any questions.

ORH DEFINED URBAN, RURAL, AND FRONTIER AREAS

