

Submitter: Andrew Friedman
On Behalf Of: United We Heal
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On Human Services
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB5025

Testimony of Andrew Friedman, United We Heal
2/5/2025

Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On Human Services

The United We Heal Partnership (UWH)

Formed in 2021,

UWH is a non-profit, labor-management Training partnership - Equal governance by labor and employer representatives;

Focused on healthcare workforce development,

Labor partner, Oregon AFSCME Council 75 brings the breadth of voices and experiences of more than 3,000 behavioral health workers who are employed with non-profit organizations, many County Health departments, and the State of Oregon.

Union and Non Union behavioral health employers participating;

Workers trained in Multnomah, Clackamas, Washington, Clatsop, Coos, Hood River, Lane, Sherman, Umatilla, Wasco, and Yamhill counties

The United We Heal coalition

Current UWH Programs

Four BOLI-registered apprenticeships (QMHA, CADDC, MA, QMHP)

Behavioral Health Pre-Apprenticeship (3 high schools, 7 additional in September)

Physical healthcare training programs with OHSU in 4 occupations

Why UWH?

Overwhelming unmet need. More of the same won't work

Oregon has some of the worst mental health and addictions outcomes in the U.S. and the worst unmet need for SUD services.

Workers Want to Stay and advance their careers

Studies show that turnover is driven by lack of career advancement opportunities and low wages and substandard benefits. We need to find innovative ways to support this workforce;

MHACBO survey finds 35% of BH workers want to advance their careers in behavioral health. We need to engage these workers who are most likely to remain.

Our Solution - Equity Designed

The Traditional Pathway:

QMHA and CADDC certifications through post-secondary education causing individuals to leave work to pursue these certifications, re-entering the field with

student debt; Debt relief programs support individuals whose lives have allowed them to forgo income and incur debt.

Apprenticeship Solution:

Work concurrent with classroom learning.

Earn while you learn - Don't leave work, Don't forgo income.

Free tuition - Don't incur debt,

Time efficient: Don't engage in non-required coursework;

Work experience valued as learning; Proven more effective than terminal internships;

Work environment aligned with US DOL Good Jobs standards;

Supportive services for participants (childcare/transportation/costs of living);

UWH Successes: Participants and Equity Outcomes

Currently Registered Apprentices: 74

Graduates: 59

73% High School/GED prior to entry

Individuals with lived experience in active recovery, homelessness, serious mental illness

Participants identify as:

69% as female or gender non-binary

45% as BIPOC or Hispanic/Latinx

32% as a person with a disability

90% identify with an underserved community

Next for UWH in Behavioral Healthcare Training..

QMHP - Masters degree level apprenticeship

Recruiting now for Fall 2025:

Candidates pursuing acceptance with Western Oregon University;

Free tuition,

Paid Practicum and Internships in Medicaid population-serving community mental health settings;

Supportive services;

Post completion retention bonuses;

Clinical supervision reimbursement for employers.

Developing future options for program modifications to further focus on crediting work experience in community mental health;