

2/10/25

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

I write to you in strong support of SB 531, which will provide \$1.6m in funding for the Oregon Wellness Program. This funding is incredibly important to restore and maintain adequate support for our licensed health care workforce across the state. The program provides fast, trusted access to specially trained licensed mental health professionals, which helps those seeking care through the program get the care they need.

Licensed health care providers need a safe conduit to access trusted and confidential mental health care, and since 2017, the Oregon Wellness Program has been there. Case rates have increased annually, but funding for the program has not kept pace with the demand, and as a result for the first time, the number of available sessions has declined.

We ask a lot of our health care professionals in Oregon. Rates of burnout and stress remain high, and research shows that these caregivers need programmatic support to try to bring down their higher rates of suicide. In a time when Oregon is rightly focused on improving behavioral health access for all Oregonians, we urge the Committee to see this funding as an essential component of that work.

Respectfully,



Betsy Boyd-Flynn
CEO & Executive Director
Oregon Academy of Family Physicians