

February 9, 2025

Testimony in support of Senate Bill 531.

To the members of the Committee on [Healthcare](#),

For the record, my name is Caroline Mary Floyd Barrett. I am a family physician practicing in Portland at Oregon Health and Sciences University, where I have practiced for close to 3 years as a primary care physician at the women's health center. I also work for Yakima Valley Farm Workers Clinic in Woodburn and Salem, Oregon, where I have worked for the past 2 years as a same-day urgent care provider. I am testifying in support of Senate Bill 531.

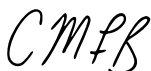
Senate Bill 531 does the following things:

- Appropriates 1.6 million dollars to the Oregon Administrative Services for The Oregon Wellness Program.
- Promotes the wellbeing of Oregon's healthcare professionals through education, confidential coordinated regional counseling services, telemedicine services, and research.

As a family medicine physician practicing primary care in Oregon since finishing residency in 2019, and at OHSU since 2022, I care for many healthcare professionals experiencing burnout, depression and anxiety. I hear stories from my patients, friends and colleagues that they are hesitant to seek mental health support for fear of professional repercussions from The Oregon Medical Board, their specialty boards or their employers. They fear stigma from colleagues for needing mental health treatment. The Oregon Wellness Program offers free, confidential mental health services, usually within 3 business days, to Oregon physicians, nurses, advanced care practitioners and dentists. Physicians have a higher rate of suicide than the general populace, with female physicians being greater than 2 times more likely to complete suicide than non-physician females.<sup>1</sup> We face a shortage of healthcare professionals in Oregon and maintaining our workforce is an essential public health measure. Active treatment of mental health disorders and prevention of physician and healthcare professional suicide is critical to the wellbeing of all Oregonians. The Oregon Wellness Program provides a crucial service to protect the mental wellbeing of our state's healthcare professionals.

In closing, I urge you to support Senate Bill 531.

Sincerely



Caroline MF Barrett, MD

References:

1. Preventing suicide among health care professionals. American Foundation for Suicide Prevention. Published September 20, 2021.

<https://www.datocms-assets.com/12810/1578319045-physician-mental-health-suicide-one-pager.pdf>