



February 14, 2025
House Committee on Behavioral Health and Health Care
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Tri-County Behavioral Health Providers Association (TCBHPA), we are writing to **voice our support of House Bills 2554, 3339, and 3351**. These interstate licenses compact bills are important steps toward addressing Oregon's significant behavioral health workforce shortages by enabling the state to join interstate licensure compacts for social workers, psychologists, and professional counselors.

Oregon faces a critical need for behavioral health services. Mental health conditions among Oregonians, especially young adults and adolescents, have risen dramatically during and after the pandemic. While this mirrors larger national trends, the need for mental health professionals is especially high in Oregon. According to a report by the Oregon Health Authority, **Oregon ranks fourth in the nation in unmet mental health needs.**¹ The Mental Health and Addiction Certification Board of Oregon (MHACBO) maintains over 20,000 active certifications for approximately 17,000 behavioral health professionals.² However, a 2022 report by the Alcohol and Drug Policy Commission indicated that **Oregon was short by 36,000 behavioral health care workers**, with six counties lacking a single licensed provider.³

These workforce shortages have tangible impacts on our communities, leading to increased caseloads, provider burnout, and limited access to essential services. There is growing public acknowledgment of the intertwined nature of behavioral health issues and homelessness, further emphasizing the need to provide comprehensive mental health and substance use services to mitigate homelessness and cycles of addiction.⁴ **By joining these interstate compacts, Oregon can expand its pool of qualified behavioral health providers, helping to address these systemic challenges that impact children, adults, and families across the state.**

While we strongly support these licensure compacts as a means to increase provider availability, we recognize that **retaining and expanding the behavioral health workforce also requires sustainable reimbursement rates**. We continue to urge the Legislature to pair these licensure initiatives with meaningful rate increases to ensure that qualified providers can and will continue to serve Oregon's communities effectively.

We appreciate your leadership in advancing policies that strengthen our behavioral health system and encourage your support of these bills as part of a broader commitment to ensuring access to care.
Thank you for your consideration,

Board of Directors

On behalf of the **Tri-County Behavioral Health Providers Association** - www.tcbhpa.org

1. <https://www.qualityinfo.org/-/demand-for-mental-health-professionals-rising-in-oregon-6>
2. https://www.mhacbo.org/media/filer_public/7b/61/7b61bfc3-9059-400a-82b1-3180c51e6b29/2025mhacbobhworkforceanalysisfinalversionweb0101.pdf
3. <https://oregonbusiness.com/the-life-of-the-mind/>
4. <https://oregonvbc.org/homelessness-oct22/>