



House Committee on Higher Education and Workforce Development  
900 Court Street NE  
Salem, OR 97301  
RE: Support for HB 3129

Dear Chair Hudson, Vice Chairs Fragala and Harbick, and members of the Committee,

Located in Portland, Oregon, Central City Concern (CCC) provides a comprehensive continuum of affordable housing options integrated with direct social services including health care, recovery, and employment. In 2024, CCC helped 15,991 people experiencing or at risk of homelessness with affordable and supportive housing, integrated health services, addiction recovery and employment assistance.

Oregon's behavioral health workforce is severely underfunded and understaffed, with an estimated shortage of 35,000 professionals statewide, a gap exacerbated by workforce instability, a lack of diversity in care providers, and the high demand for services due to mental health and substance use issues worsened by the pandemic. CCC is tackling this challenge head-on by developing a new generation of behavioral health leaders.

In 2024, CCC launched the Behavioral Health Talent Academy (BHTA), a training program designed to address Oregon's critical shortage of behavioral health professionals. The BHTA offers a rich learning experience for CCC employees, empowering them to pursue certifications such as Certified Alcohol and Drug Counselor (CADC 1), Qualified Mental Health Associate (QMHA 1), and Peer Support Specialist (CRM & PWS). The goal is to equip employees with the tools, confidence, and credentials needed to advance in their careers and provide essential mental health and substance use disorder services to our community.

Through the BHTA, CCC offers comprehensive support, including career development resources, financial assistance, and mentorship throughout the process. Employees are provided with the guidance and tools needed to navigate their education while balancing work and life responsibilities. By offering certifications in key behavioral health fields, the BHTA creates pathways for employees to build long-term careers and help address the critical shortage of skilled professionals in Oregon's behavioral health system.

However, CCC struggles to secure sustainable funding for supervision costs and stipends for trainees. HB 3129 presents an opportunity to invest in programs like CCC's Behavioral Health Training Academy, ensuring that training dollars directly support the organizations doing the critical work of growing Oregon's workforce.

HB 3129 coupled with a broad range of approaches for workforce development, supports our local community colleges and universities to provide the education needed for a strong



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and quality behavioral health workforce. This money should be in a fund dedicated to drive results and include critical components such as stipends and supervision, provided directly to students and community-based organizations that help facilitate their training.

This legislature can take a critical step toward stabilizing and expanding Oregon's behavioral health workforce—ensuring that those most in need receive timely, effective, and culturally appropriate care.

Thank you for your leadership and commitment to improving behavioral health access in Oregon.

Sincerely,

Rose Goren, MPH, Public Policy Analyst