

**Chair Hudson, Vice-Chairs Fragala and Harbick, and members of the committee:**

My name is Wyatt Sexton, I am a student working towards a career in behavioral health. I'm writing to give my support for HB 3129, which will greatly help Oregon's behavioral health workforce.

**The current workforce shortage threatens the wellbeing of many Oregonians, especially those in underserved communities who struggle a lot to find care.** Oregon consistently has some of the highest rates of mental illness in the US, and struggles with workforce availability. According to the [2024 State of Mental Health in America Report](#), we are the fifth worst state for behavioral health. We have a lot of people who need help, and not enough people to provide it.

**The workforce shortage will more severely impact the future of the workforce if we don't act now, as attaining a license in this field requires supervised experience.** Supervisors are now spread thin and are struggling with burnout. If we cannot retain our current workforce or encourage growth, we will see worse availability in the future.

**HB 3129 addresses multiple issues at once:**

- The communities that need the most care will be given better access, as an expanded and diversified workforce will be better suited to handle the unique challenges of different groups. This bill's focus on underserved populations is a huge benefit to them.
- Students who want to work in behavioral health will have a better path forward, they need more financial help as well as opportunities to gain experience. We cannot increase the number of specialists if students struggle to enter the field. This is mainly addressed through more scholarships and training programs.
- Expanded behavioral health programs can address high rates of mental illness as we train more licensed professionals, and the current workforce can be retained with better pay for supervisors.

I urge this committee to pass HB 3129 and invest in the future of our behavioral health.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Wyatt Sexton  
Western Oregon University