



Chair Hartman and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Tri-County Behavioral Health Providers Association (TCBHPA), we are writing to voice our support of HB 3224 which will streamline the background check process for the behavioral health and social service workforce.

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

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

While we strongly support HB 3224 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 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,

The TCBHPA Board of Directors