



Dear Chair Nosse 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 3229 which proposes important changes to the Oregon Health Plan (OHP) enrollment process.

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

The updates introduced by HB 3229 could help alleviate these challenges by improving the enrollment process and supporting the retention of qualified providers. This would ultimately improve access to much-needed behavioral health services for OHP members.

While we strongly support HB 3229 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