



FROM: Lynette H. Bikos, PhD, ABPP; Dean, School of Graduate Psychology, Pacific University Oregon  
RE: Testimony for Senate Bill 581  
DATE: March 4, 2025

In this letter, I offer testimony surrounding SB 581, establishing the Psychology Provider Incentive Fund.

I am coming to you as a Licensed Psychologist with Board Certification in Counseling Psychology. I am also the Dean of the School of Graduate Psychology in the College of Health Professions at Pacific University Oregon. The School of Graduate Psychology offers a Masters in Applied Clinical Psychology, a PsyD (practice-focused doctoral degree) in Clinical Psychology, and a PhD (a research-focused doctoral degree) in Clinical Psychology. Each of these programs holds secondary accreditation from their respective accrediting bodies. Our contribution to training in professional psychology has a long history; our PsyD program celebrates its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2025.

Annually, Pacific University Oregon contributes approximately 120 graduates eligible to be licensed as mental health providers at the master's level and 50 graduates who (with a year of post-doctoral supervision) are license-eligible at the doctoral level. The School of Graduate Psychology is also home to an Oregon Health Authority Certified clinic, the Pacific Psychology & Comprehensive Clinic, that served 568 distinct patients in its Hillsboro and downtown Portland locations during its 2023-2024 academic year. The majority were Oregon Health Plan members. Additionally, our psychology students participate in clinically supervised placements/practica in the region, serving an additional 11,799 patients in 125 sites during this same timeframe.

In spirit, I support SB 581 because it addresses two critical issues (a) the importance of culturally competent services and (b) addressing the high cost of doctoral level education. In addition to my support, I also offer questions about how this would be implemented.

### **Culturally and Socially Responsive Training is an Important Goal**

I am encouraged to see a bill put forward that incentivizes training in cultural competence. As written, the housing stipends and loan repayment subsidies may motivate students to obtain more training in cultural responsiveness. This goal is shared by programs accredited by the American Psychological Association. In 2020, APA's Council of Chairs of Training Councils (CCTC) created a [Toolkit](#) that provides guidance for infusing social responsivity into health service psychology programs.

Historically, doctoral programs have identified "one or two" courses as meeting the diversity/multicultural requirements. More presently, competencies around cultural and social responsiveness are expected to be integrated throughout the program. For example, I taught statistics and research methods for more than 20 years. In recent years, the research vignettes I used for my weekly lectures drew from recent, peer-reviewed publications, that used the same statistic I was teaching, but the focus of the vignette was on an issue of equity, diversity, inclusion, and social justice. In this way as students were learning analysis of variance, structural equation modeling, and psychometrics, they were simultaneously exposed to topics of microaggressions, cultural humility, and discrimination.

In the APA-accredited doctoral programs at Pacific University, students in the PsyD Clinical Psychology program are required to take two diversity courses and in the PhD Clinical Psychology program are expected to take one. Yet, numerous other courses (e.g., Ethics; History and Systems; Trauma, Theory, & Practice) explicitly and intentionally address issues that contribute to cultural competence.

Thus, a concern I have is that ***there may not be four separate courses for students to take that, on review of a transcript, would appear to be focused on cultural competence.*** This does not mean that the student is not receiving this training, rather, it is infused throughout the curriculum.

### **Doctoral Education is Expensive**

During the admissions process, applicants (particularly those from first-generation and minoritized backgrounds) express worries about how to pay for their education. As written, the Psychology Provider Incentive Fund could be available to provide stipends for housing costs and to provide loan repayment subsidies. Such support could assist in reducing the debt-to-income ratio for graduates.

I did have several questions about these benefits. First, how would housing stipends be awarded? If four courses are required, they would be sprinkled throughout the five-or-six years of the doctoral training program? Would housing stipends be awarded continuously? Only while the student was in a qualifying course? Or after all four courses had been completed?

Second, would loan subsidies be available for doctoral-level psychology graduates (who met the coursework criteria) who attended Oregon universities and work, post-doctorally, in Oregon? Or, does it extend to those moving to Oregon from other institutions? Or who studied in Oregon but move out-of-state?

### **Mandatory Employer Preferences**

Another aspect of the bill is “guaranteed” full-time employment in the Department of Public Safety Standards and Training. I was surprised at the “guarantee” of employment. Then, in Section 3 (2), was confused that the “period of employment with the department must be for at least six consecutive months and not longer than 12 consecutive months.” Unless it were for a post-doctoral fellowship (where graduates would not yet be licensed), I cannot imagine post-doctoral psychologists seeking such temporary work.

To conclude, I encourage supporting psychology doctoral students (and graduates) through support during school and in loan repayment programs. I hope my questions are helpful as you think about enacting this bill. Should you wish to consult on any amendments or revisions, I would be happy to engage in dialogue.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this critical issue.