



Date: Mar 18, 2025

Chair Reynolds, Vice-Chair Anderson, Members of the Committee,

OCBH is the statewide association of providers that serve individuals living with the chronic diseases of addiction and mental illness. It is likely the behavioral health providers in your districts are members of OCBH.

We write to you in support of SB 142, which seeks to invest in Oregon's behavioral health workers. Access to high-quality behavioral health care depends on a strong, stable workforce. However, providers serving individuals with the highest and most acute needs are facing chronic staffing shortages that undermine care.

Statewide our providers have open positions they are unable to fill due to their inability to compete with other employers. Additionally, OCBH members are making annual investments, increasing salaries for their workers in hopes of retaining them, all without any support from the state in the form of a commensurate rate increase.

An OCBH survey of providers determined that after the 2022 and 2023 legislative investments in the workforce, open positions reduced by an average of 40%. We know these strategies work.

SB 142 will support the workforce by allowing providers to offer recruitment and retention support in the form of loan forgiveness, sign-on bonuses, housing stipends, etc. that will allow our providers to compete to employ high-quality staff. Additionally, the bill supports institutions of higher education in creating a pipeline of new workers needed to meet the demand for services.

We are working with the Governor's office to ensure these supports are available to the workers who need them most: those who've dedicated their lives to serving individuals on Medicaid and those serving individuals with the most acute behavioral health needs. Additionally we are sharing ideas for how to ensure ongoing support for the workforce through an incentive payment that will allow providers to maintain any investments made in the workforce.

We urge your support of SB 142.

Heather Jefferis  
Executive Director  
Oregon Council for Behavioral Health