

March 18, 2025

Chair Reynolds, Vice Chair Anderson, and members of the committee,

Portland Community College strongly supports SB 142, which invests in expanding Oregon's behavioral health workforce. As the state's largest higher education institution, PCC is dedicated to providing accessible and workforce-driven education that meets the needs of both students and employers. Strengthening behavioral health services requires increasing access to high-quality training programs, and this bill is a critical step in that effort.

PCC offers programs like Family & Human Services and Addiction Counseling that prepare students for careers in behavioral health and addiction services. Our programs provide students with the education, hands-on experience, career pathways, and the specialized skills in addiction recovery, case management, intervention strategies, and behavioral health needed to serve their communities. These essential skills ensure students are workforce ready and prepared to meet the needs of high-demand careers in the field.

PCC's Behavioral Health Pathway offers a structured and progressive educational journey for students pursuing careers in Behavioral Health, Human Services, and Addiction Counseling. With multiple entry points ranging from foundational coursework and certificates to associate of applied science degrees, this pathway ensures clear employment outcomes at each stage.

PCC's Behavioral Health Pathway is designed to align with Oregon's workforce development priorities by offering industry relevant microcredentials and expanding access to bilingual programming. In using a "stackable" credit model, students build upon previous credentials, enabling them to earn employment enhancing technical certifications as well as multiple certificates and associate degrees. This flexible approach enhances employability and supports career advancement, ensuring students

can progress at their own pace while acquiring the necessary skills and experiences to thrive in the behavioral health field.

Furthermore, through strategic programming and collaboration between our human services and addiction studies programs as well as the development of strong industry partnerships, PCC is actively addressing workforce shortages and creating clear pathways from education to employment. Our continuous efforts to refine and expand our offerings ensure that students receive high-quality, accessible training tailored to meet the evolving demands of the behavioral health field.

Many of our students are passionate about addressing the urgent need for qualified professionals, but financial constraints, limited clinical placement opportunities, and workforce retention challenges continue to hinder progress in this field. SB 142 directly supports our students by reducing financial barriers, expanding training opportunities, and ensuring career pathways into the behavioral health workforce.

Portland Community College is committed to developing a skilled and diverse behavioral health workforce that can meet Oregon's growing needs. Our commitment to excellence empowers graduates with the skills, credentials, and confidence they need to make a lasting impact in their communities. We urge the committee to advance SB 142 and invest in the future of mental health care across the state.

Thank you for your time and consideration, and please let me know if you have any questions.

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