

Submitter:

Eric Wiser

On Behalf Of:

Committee:

Senate Committee On Education

Measure, Appointment or Topic:

SB581

As Director of Oregon Area Health Education Center (AHEC), I am writing to express our strong support for SB 581 in the 2025 regular session. Strengthening Oregon's behavioral health care workforce is essential to meeting the growing and complex needs of communities across the state — especially in rural and underserved areas.

This topic was a key focus during our statewide advisory board meeting in October, where we gathered insights from partners working across education, training and service delivery. As a result of those discussions, we are actively working on several related initiatives: broadening the definition of "primary care" to include school-based behavioral health and urgent care settings; addressing incentive program eligibility for behavioral health care providers serving rural areas virtually; and advocating for preceptor funding and tax credits that reward high-quality teaching.

We are also focusing on increasing behavioral health care skills across all provider types, supporting a more integrated approach to care rather than isolating behavioral health care as a separate specialty. Training efforts must emphasize the transition from primary to specialty psychiatric care and include more comprehensive behavioral health care rotations. In addition, we strongly support the development of a behavioral health care preceptor ECHO model to provide mentorship and ongoing professional development for clinical educators, especially those in remote and rural settings.

SB 581 reflects these shared priorities and represents a significant step forward in ensuring a strong, sustainable and equitable behavioral health workforce in Oregon. We appreciate the continued leadership on this critical issue and urge your support for this important legislation.

Please feel free to reach out if we can provide additional information or perspective.

Thank you,

Eric Wiser MD, FAAFP (he/him)

Assistant Dean, Rural Undergraduate Medical Education (UME)

Assistant Professor, Department of Family Medicine

Director Oregon Area Health Education Center (AHEC)

Oregon Health & Science University