



MEMORANDUM

To: Sen. Janeen Sollman, Co-Chair, Joint W&M Subcommittee on Education
Rep. Ricki Ruiz, Co-Chair, Joint W&M Subcommittee on Education
Members of the W&M Subcommittee on Education

From: Bryan Boehringer, Executive Vice President, Oregon Medical Association

Date: April 23, 2025

Re: OMA support for SB 5525 – Oregon Health & Science University (OHSU) Budget

The Oregon Medical Association (OMA) represents and advocates for more than 7,000 physicians, physician associates (PAs), and medical and PA students across Oregon. Our mission is to support our members in their efforts to practice medicine effectively, improve the health of Oregonians, and provide the highest quality patient care.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony in support of the OHSU budget and urge that the subcommittee provide full funding for the School of Medicine, the Office of Rural Health and the Area Health Education Centers (AHEC) programs at OHSU. Funding these health education programs is vital to all Oregonians and will continue to invest in our state’s fragile healthcare workforce.

OHSU’s programs in primary care, family medicine and rural medicine rank among the best in the nation and continue to attract a diverse group of qualified students. (In 2022, U.S. News & World Report ranked OHSU 4th in the nation for primary care education.) OHSU also ranks well in retaining trained medical students who not only continue their training in Oregon but also remain practicing in Oregon for years to come. An analysis by the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) shows that of students who graduated from OHSU in the five-year span between 2010-2014, just over 1/3 of them were still practicing in the state 15 years later. Additionally, this same study showed that OHSU continues to be above the 95th percentile for graduates who practice in primary care and the 84th percentile for graduates practicing in rural areas.

Oregon’s investment in medical education has allowed Oregon to maintain a high retention rate and to slowly grow the physician workforce. Without the continued investment from the state to maintain these programs, Oregon’s physician workforce is at risk - both to be trained in Oregon and to remain in Oregon. (71% of OHSU School of Medicine classes are Oregonians.)

Investing in tomorrow’s medical doctors and physician associates enables the OHSU School of Medicine to keep tuition rates steady and helps lower overall student debt. Making sure a medical

school education is attainable for Oregon residents and attracting students from other states is critical to increasing Oregon's physician and PA workforce and ensuring health care access to all Oregonians.

Unfortunately, OHSU graduates continue to struggle with debt, and pressure to pay off that debt can discourage physicians from practicing in rural and underserved areas where reimbursement rates are lower. The average indebtedness for OHSU medical students is historically above the 75th percentile for allopathic medical schools.

Key investments by the Oregon Legislature, such as the Scholars for a Healthy Oregon Initiative (SHOI) and the 30-30-30 investment are just a few examples of the programs OHSU operates to help increase and distribute the workforce across the state and to underserved disciplines.

Recruiting and retaining Oregon-trained physicians and PAs also requires a commitment to excellence in education that reflects today's health care environment. OHSU was one of eleven medical schools to receive a grant from the American Medical Association (AMA) aimed at closing the gap between how medical students are trained and how health care is delivered. The OHSU Curriculum Transformation Initiative continues to prepare today's medical student to practice as part of a team in a landscape shaped by health care reform, new technologies, and other health care innovations.

OHSU needs the legislature's continued investment to ensure it remains one of the nation's top medical schools. We cannot afford to waver in our state's commitment to health care education. If we fail to produce enough physicians and PAs, workforce shortages will persist resulting in fewer services available to Oregon's patients.

Finally, as founding members of the Oregon Rural Health Association, the OMA is concerned that early federal proposals indicate that funding that supports several programs at the Office of Rural Health and the AHEC program could be eliminated. State support of these programs will be even more important if federal funds are at risk.

For the reasons above, the OMA respectfully recommends that the committee approve SB 5525 and fully fund the OHSU School of Medicine, the Office of Rural Health and the AHEC program budget requests.

The Oregon Medical Association (OMA) is the state's largest professional organization engaging in advocacy, policy, and community-building for Oregon's physicians, physician associates, medical students, and physician associate students. The OMA's members speak with one voice as they advocate for policies that improve access to quality patient care, reduce administrative burdens on medical professionals, and improve the health of all Oregonians.

Additional information can be found at www.theOMA.org.