

April 18, 2025

Joint Committee on Ways and Means
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court St NE
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Co-Chairs Lieber and Sanchez,

We are students at the University of Oregon's Ballmer Institute for Children's Behavioral Health in Portland, and we are writing to express our strong support for the university's request for \$53.25 million in state bonding to build a Child Behavioral Health Building on the NE Portland campus.

As members of the first class of students pursuing degrees in children's behavioral health, we are deeply committed to addressing the urgent mental health needs of youth across Oregon. Every day in our studies and practical training, we see how much support kids need—and how often that support simply isn't there. Oregon continues to rank near the bottom nationally for youth access to mental health care, and families are struggling to find the help their children need. We chose this academic path because we want to be part of the solution.

The proposed Child Behavioral Health Building is a major step forward. It will bring together direct care for kids and teens, cutting-edge research, and the education and training of future behavioral health professionals like us. Having a space where these pieces come together is essential for changing the way our state responds to the youth mental health crisis. This facility won't just help those in need today; it will help shape a better system for the future.

This project reflects everything the Ballmer Institute stands for: community connection, innovation, equity, and action. It's also aligned with the state's broader goals around workforce development. As students preparing to enter the children's behavioral health workforce, we know firsthand how important this investment is—not only for our education, but for the kids and families we're preparing to serve.

Please support funding for this crucial project. We're ready to be part of the change Oregon's youth need. With your support, we can help build a healthier, more hopeful future for children across our state.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Bella Hernandez
Ernie Leyva
Sophia Morgan

Kazuki Tanaka
Laine Lovgren

Students at the Ballmer Institute for Children's Behavioral Health
University of Oregon