



April 22, 2025

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

Dear Co-Chairs Lieber and Sanchez,

On behalf of the Children's Health Alliance, we write in strong support of the University of Oregon's request for \$53.25 million in state bonding to construct a Child Behavioral Health Building to expand access to care and strengthen Oregon's behavioral health workforce.

Oregon ranks 49th nationally in Mental Health America's 2024 Youth Ranking, reflecting both the high rates of behavioral health challenges among adolescents and the limited availability of timely, effective care. These challenges affect children and families in both rural and urban communities across the state.

Reversing this trend requires strategic investment in both behavioral health service delivery and the education and training infrastructure needed to expand the workforce. The Child Behavioral Health Building is uniquely positioned to address both.

This 54,000-square-foot facility on the UO Portland campus will:

- Expand access to free, evidence-based behavioral health services for youth and families.
- Reach rural and underserved communities through a new telehealth center.
- Train a diverse new workforce of behavioral health professionals equipped to serve in schools, clinics, and community settings.
- Support research and innovation to improve outcomes and strengthen care systems across the state.

By combining clinical services, workforce training, and applied research, the facility supports a comprehensive approach to addressing Oregon's youth behavioral health needs.

The building will house the Ballmer Institute for Children's Behavioral Health, which offers a first-of-its-kind undergraduate program focused on preparing students to identify and address behavioral health challenges early, and the Prevention Science Institute, which conducts research to develop effective behavioral health interventions and partners with schools and communities to put them into practice. Bringing these



CHILDREN'S HEALTH *alliance*

two institutes together under one roof will align workforce preparation with applied research and service delivery, strengthening the pipeline from classroom to care and expanding support for children and families across Oregon.

The Children's Health Alliance pediatricians care for approximately 190,000 children and their families in the Portland metro area and Salem. More than half of our patient-centered primary care homes provide integrated behavioral health services to support the health of their young patients. The addition of behavioral health services to their primary care home has been transformational. Integrating behavioral health services into primary care is crucial for early identification and treatment, offering children and their families accessible, timely, and comprehensive care. Primary care settings serve as the first point of contact for families seeking health services, and when behavioral health providers are integrated into these environments, they can address mental health concerns proactively and efficiently, often preventing more severe issues down the road.

However, it is challenging to find a workforce with the appropriate skillset to serve the needs of children in our practices and to approach the behavioral health needs proactively rather than reactively. We believe that the Ballmer Institute's innovative program will build the workforce Oregon needs for early childhood behavioral health needs and prevention and place their students and graduates in settings that are most in need of support.

We respectfully urge you to prioritize funding for this high-impact, forward-looking investment in children, families, and the state's behavioral health infrastructure. Oregon's youth deserve access to the care they need, and this project will help ensure they receive it.

Sincerely,

Deborah Rumsey  
Executive Director  
Children's Health Alliance

Resa Bradeen, MD  
Medical Director  
Children's Health Alliance