



Chair Gelser Blouin and Members of the Senate Human Services Committee,

On behalf of the Tri-County Behavioral Health Providers Association (TCBHPA), we respectfully urge your support for *House Bill 3224*, which will streamline the background check process for Oregon’s behavioral health and social service workforce.

Oregon continues to experience a behavioral health crisis that has only deepened in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. The need for mental health and substance use treatment—especially among young people—has risen sharply. Our state currently ranks fourth in the nation for unmet mental health needs, according to the Oregon Health Authority.

Workforce shortages remain one of the primary barriers to expanding access to care. Providers across the state are facing unmanageable caseloads, high rates of burnout, and limited capacity to serve individuals and families in need. These challenges are compounded by the urgent need to address the intersection of behavioral health, housing instability, and addiction in our communities.

By reducing delays and redundancies in the background check process, HB 3224 represents a practical step toward getting qualified professionals into the workforce more efficiently—without compromising safety or oversight. However, to truly stabilize and grow Oregon’s behavioral health system, we urge the Legislature to also invest in *sustainable reimbursement rates* that reflect the essential nature of this work.

We appreciate the Senate Human Services Committee’s ongoing commitment to improving access to behavioral health services across the state. Your leadership is vital in ensuring that providers can continue meeting the needs of our most vulnerable populations.

Thank you for your consideration of HB 3224 and for your broader efforts to strengthen Oregon’s behavioral health system.

Thank you for your consideration,

The TCBHPA Board of Directors