



PETER COURTNEY
President of the Senate

Senate Health Care and Human Services Committee

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Sen. Jeff Kruse, Vice Chair

Sen. Elizabeth Steiner Hayward

Sen. Chip Shields

Sen. Tim Knopp

TESTIMONY BY SENATOR PETER COURTNEY

SUPPORTING SB 2

MARCH 26, 2013

Chair Monnes Anderson, Vice Chair Kruse, members of the committee: thank you for hearing my testimony today in support of SB 2.

My name is Peter Courtney. I live in NE Salem. I am a state Senator for District 11 which includes Woodburn, Gervais, and east Salem.

According to the 2012 data collected by the Oregon Healthcare Workforce Institute, our physician workforce is also aging. In 2012, 39% of Oregon's physician workforce was 55 or older. Between 2010 and 2012, there was a 7.8% drop in the number of primary care physicians practicing in Oregon. The number of physician assistants in primary care declined by 2.1%, while the number practitioners in primary care specialties have increased. As such, we need to incentivize doctors, nurse practitioners, and physician assistants into primary care settings. Furthermore, in 2012, 6% of physicians reported plans to reduce hours, move out-of-state, or retire in the next 2 years.

In 2012, only 10 of Oregon's 36 counties reported having the full spectrum of health practitioners (Clackamas, Coos, Deschutes, Jackson, Lane, Linn, Marion, Multnomah, Washington and Yamhill counties). Sherman is the only county where no physician identified a practice address. Three counties—Gilliam, Morrow, and Sherman—did not have any dentists.

In addition, the high tuition at OHSU results in students graduating with significant amounts of debt. On average:

Dentistry MD	-- \$193,351;
MD	-- \$182,226;
BSN	-- \$ 44,777

In summary, we are living longer and people over 65 have more complex health care needs as ailments accumulate; there is not enough primary care health practitioners to meet the needs of the growing population and the number of physicians is decreasing; the primary care doctors that are practicing

tend to gravitate towards populated, affluent areas; and the cost of school is prohibitive or leads students into higher paying specialties.

To address this issue, SB 2 creates health care scholarships for degrees in primary care in exchange for years of service in an underserved community -- rural or urban poor. The years of service are equal to the number of years of scholarship provided plus one. Should the recipient leave his/her service early, they are responsible for repayment at a prorated rate plus 25%. Preference will be given to students who are of rural Oregon heritage; first generation college students; or from diverse or underrepresented communities.

As the administrator of this program, OHSU is required to report back to the legislature annually regarding the total number of active participants and the number of participants within each health care practitioner category.

I am asking for 4.9 million per biennium for this program, which would fund 40 students: 12 MD; 6 PA; 6 Dentists; 6 CRNA; and 10 Graduate Nurses. I don't like to ask for General Fund dollars, but this is extremely important to ensure the health care needs of Oregonians are met in the coming years.