



MEASURE: SB 2
EXHIBIT: 3
S. HEALTHCARE & HUMAN SERVICES
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SUBMITTED BY: Bryan Boehringer

MEMORANDUM

To: Sen. Monnes Anderson, Chair, Senate Health Care and Human Services Committee
Sen. Kruse, Vice-Chair, Senate Health Care and Human Services Committee
Members of Senate Health Care and Human Services Committee

From: Bryan Boehringer, OMA Government Affairs

Date: March 26, 2013

Re: Support for SB 2

The Oregon Medical Association is committed to supporting the development and retention of an adequate number of well-educated physicians and physician assistants to meet the health care needs of all Oregonians, across the state. We support SB 2 which creates the Scholars for a Healthy Oregon Initiative. These scholarships will provide an affordable avenue for Oregon students to pursue a career in medicine at OHSU that commits them to practicing in rural Oregon for at least one year longer than the number of years spent earning their degree.

In Oregon, the provision of health care in rural areas has been challenged by low numbers of physicians and other providers. Recent data from the Oregon Rural Health Association shows that the ratio of providers to patient population is only 135 physicians per 100,000 in rural Oregon (compared to 335 to 100,000 in urban Oregon).

Hospitals and clinical practices have difficulty recruiting physicians to Oregon, especially in rural areas. Oregon must 'compete' for physicians with every other state with rural opportunities. We know that physicians who are trained in Oregon are likely to stay here; this program would not only train physicians in Oregon: students must be Oregon residents to qualify. Incentivizing medical careers for Oregon students ensures that Oregon stays competitive and grows its rural health care workforce.

This bill, which will award up to 40 scholarships over the next biennium, promotes diversity within the health care workforce and aids in the growth of the OHSU rural rotation program. Many physicians and health care providers, at the end of their medical training, find they are unable to pursue rural health practice due to the overwhelming debt-to-income ratio available to them in rural areas. Students are increasingly finding that, due to their debt levels, they must either choose higher paying, non-rural jobs or pursue a career as a specialist. Giving students, especially those from rural or underrepresented areas, a mechanism to pursue a career medicine that eliminates any financial restraints to rural practice, ensures that all Oregonians have access to high quality, safe health care services.

The OMA sees this program as a complimentary program to the Primary Health Care Loan Forgiveness Program (HB 2858) and the Rural Health Practitioner Tax Credit (SB 325); all three of these programs incent physicians and physician assistants to practice in Oregon and help create a more robust health care workforce that meets the health care needs of all Oregonians.

We urge your support of the next generation of rural health care practitioners through the creation of the Scholars for a Healthy Oregon Initiative.

The Oregon Medical Association is an organization of over 7,800 physicians, physician assistants, and medical students organized to serve and support physicians in their efforts to improve the health of Oregonians. Additional information can be found at www.theOMA.org.