



Oregon Office of Rural Health

Mail code: L593  
3181 S.W. Sam Jackson Park Road  
Portland, Oregon 97239-3098  
tel 503 494-4450 | fax 503 494-4798  
toll free 866 674-4376  
[www.ohsu.edu/oregonruralhealth](http://www.ohsu.edu/oregonruralhealth)

Testimony re: HB 3396  
House Health Care Committee  
March 30, 2015  
Scott Ekblad, Director, Oregon Office of Rural Health

Chair Greenlick, Vice-Chairs Hayden and Nosse, Members of the Committee:

There was quite a bit of discussion during the 2013 Legislative session regarding the various healthcare workforce incentive programs in the state. A work group was formed during the interim to compare their effectiveness and to see if they could be better aligned. At the same time, the Oregon Healthcare Workforce Committee was tasked by the Oregon Health Policy Board to do essentially the same thing. The consensus of both groups was that we cannot make informed decisions without better data and, more importantly, ongoing analysis and evaluation of these programs to determine whether they need to be changed and how.

One idea that got a bit of traction was that of combining the funds of similar programs. That would enable the flexibility to shift monies from one to the other based on current need. HB 3396 would combine the funds of three different programs – loan repayment, loan forgiveness and OHSU’s Scholars for a Healthy Oregon Initiative (SHOI). Funding for these programs currently go to three different entities, although the Oregon Office of Rural Health is involved in the administration – entirely or in part - of all three. HB 3396 would also send the funds for all three of the programs directly to the Oregon Office of Rural Health.

This bill is also in alignment with general agreement among the interim work group participants in that it relies on the advisory oversight of healthcare workforce experts including the Oregon Healthcare Workforce Institute (OHWI) and the Oregon Center for Nursing (OCN). This advisory group would determine how to allocate the monies in the newly created Health Care Provider Incentive Fund among the three programs named. SB 757, heard by the Senate Health Care Committee today, would provide resources to OHWI and OCN for comprehensive data collection, as well as analysis and evaluation of all health care workforce incentive programs in which the state invests dollars.

It is my opinion that one of the three programs affected by this bill is not as good a fit as the other two – OHSU’s Scholars for a Healthy Oregon. It is a program that is closely tied to the admissions process at OHSU’s schools. The Oregon Office of Rural Health is only tangentially

involved with OHSU's academic mission, and we would simply contract back with the Provost's office so that the program could be administered as it is currently. Therefore, I recommend that SHOI be removed from this bill or, if not, that the language being struck on page 2, lines 22 and 23, be reinstated.

There is one other piece of information of which I believe the committee should be aware. Two of the affected programs - loan forgiveness and SHOI - are currently in OHSU's budget. The third - loan repayment - is not funded in any budget. Funding for that program went to Oregon Health Authority in the current biennium; however, OHA did not request continuation funding for the upcoming biennium.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak with you today. I am happy to answer any questions you might have.