

Sarah Paeth
OHSU Nurse-Midwifery
Scholars for a Healthy Oregon Initiative Student
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Co-Chair Komp, Co-Chair Monroe and Members of the committee,

For the record my name is Sarah Paeth and I'm a Registered Nurse and also a 1st year Nurse-Midwifery student at OHSU. Thank you for having me here today and for taking the time to listen to how the Scholars for a Healthy Oregon Initiative scholarship has influenced my life.

I grew up in Toledo, little town on the Oregon coast. I really enjoyed small town life, I loved clamming and fishing on the weekends, going to the high school events, and being involved in my community. Not only do I know everyone in town, but I know what their car looks like.

I could give the statistics of poverty in rural Oregon and the lack of access to health care, but chances are, you've heard them many times before. What you can't read about are the stories behind those statistics, the people that make up those numbers. I'm one of those people. It was my friend who didn't eat lunch for two days at the school cafeteria because she had a rotten tooth and no dentist. It's the kids I went to school with who worked to support their own parents and siblings because their parents had drug addictions. They weren't spending their money on clothes and movies, but on rent and food.

It was my band mate who slept in his car in the school parking lot because he lived too far from school to drive back and didn't have any gas money. Sometimes when we talk about poverty, we can get caught up in the specific numbers and what those numbers mean. To me and perhaps some of you, these facts aren't just numbers--they're people. They're my school mates, my neighbors, my community members. These are the people that made me want to become a nurse.

The first time I realized the huge impact that access to health care has on our lives, I was in high school and we received our school based health center. This health center was ran by a nurse and was utilized by students, but also parents and community members, too. I realized the drastic impact this had on my friends and peers in high school.

For once, we had health care right where we needed it. We didn't have to take time off of school to drive one or two towns over to see the doctor. We didn't need insurance in order to get the care we needed. We were taken care of, no matter what.

I became an advocate for SBHC at the age of 14, and rallied my community around our health center, often traveling to the state capital, writing articles in the local newspaper, and doing anything I could to spread awareness about this resource. When budget cuts