



## Oregon Rural Health Association

### **ORHA Supports HB 3261**

In 2015, the Legislature commissioned a study of Oregon's healthcare workforce incentive programs. The result of that was the Lewin Report, which found that all of Oregon's workforce incentive programs are effective. Some are better for recruitment; others for retention. But all are effective.

One of the key findings dealt with Loan Repayment Program. Loan Repayment is one of the best tools we have for attracting new providers to rural and underserved communities.

The Lewin Report's conclusion was that Oregon should be making more Loan Repayment awards and larger awards.

In the 2015 -17 biennium, the Loan Repayment Program received 150 applications but there was only funding available to make 26 awards.

We know Oregon's Loan Repayment Programs work.

Some of the best data comes from the Loan Repayment Program that was in effect between 1994 and 2008 because what we really want to know is not only does the program help us attract providers to rural communities but do they stay.

Between 1994 and 2008 Oregon made 63 loan repayment awards to doctors, nurse practitioners and physician assistants. As of 2016, 22 years after the program started, 30 or nearly half of the providers are still practicing in rural communities. Altogether, the 63 have provided more than 600 years of medical care. Clearly, this is a good investment.

The new Healthcare Workforce Incentive Fund will provide an umbrella for the Loan Repayment Program as well as scholarship programs like Scholars for a Healthy Oregon and Loan Forgiveness, and incentive programs like the Rural Malpractice Subsidy.

Our hope is that the Workforce Incentive Fund will create certainty for these important incentive programs as well as some flexibility. We know that demand for Loan Repayment far outstrips available funding. But in the Malpractice Subsidy Program, this biennium there was more funding than demand. With flexibility in the new Workforce Incentive Fund, monies will be able to be shifted where they are more needed.

Still to be developed for the Workforce Incentive Fund are the details about how much funding will be available for each of the key incentive programs. We look forward to working with you to develop those plans.

*Doug Barber, ORHA Lobbyist, [doug@lobbyoregon.com](mailto:doug@lobbyoregon.com), 541-221-3072*