

Testimony
Education Subcommittee
Joint Ways and Means Committee
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Scholars for a Healthy Oregon Initiative (SHOI) Scholarship recipient

I am fortunate and grateful to have received the SHOI Scholarship and look forward to giving back to the rural and underserved communities in Oregon.

Scholars for a Healthy Oregon Initiative (SHOI) is providing the financial support necessary to allow me to serve those who have the least access to dental care. Often these underserved areas come with financially limiting situations such as high Medicaid populations or patients' inability to pay for treatment. The average dental student is graduating with over \$260,000 in debt. The SHOI Scholarship will allow me to graduate with a more reasonable debt load, and thus the ability to serve these Medicaid and lower income populations by practicing in a rural Health Profession Shortage Area (HPSA).

SHOI will also allow me to develop deeper, more personal relationships with patients, as rural communities are usually smaller and patients and providers have more community interaction outside the healthcare setting.

Also working in a rural area will expand my experience as I will likely see a broader scope of cases because there are fewer providers and fewer specialists.

SHOI will also afford me the opportunity to volunteer my time and dental treatment. I am eager to volunteer with the dental van in Oregon that can travel to provide dental care to more remote areas where an entire practice may not be practical. The numbers also show that rural populations are becoming increasingly underserved. Rural dentists are unable to sell their practices to graduating dentists who want to work in rural areas, but are forced to work in the larger cities to be financially capable of servicing their huge student debt.

For all these, and many more reasons, SHOI recipients are truly grateful for this scholarship and look forward to showing how effective it will be at improving oral health and thus overall health of rural and underserved Oregonians.