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Legislative Field Office
Joint Committee on Ways & Means
900 Court St. NE
Room H-178
Salem, Oregon 97301

To the Joint Committee on Ways & Means:

Thank you for the opportunity to write in support of the Scholars for a Healthy Oregon Initiative (SHOI). I would like to share my experience as a graduated SHOI scholar who is now working as a Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist at one of Oregon's rural community hospitals.

I am a native Oregonian, born in Bend and raised in Washington County. I hold bachelor's degrees in biochemistry from Portland State University and in nursing from OHSU. In December of this past year, I graduated with the class of 2016 from OHSU's Nurse Anesthesia Program, completing my Master's in Nursing with a specialty in Nurse Anesthesia. With annual class sizes between 10-14 students, this is the only graduate program in the State of Oregon to educate, train, and prepare nurses to be Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists (CRNAs).

Prior to completion of degree, I am thrilled to report that I was offered a position as a CRNA in the anesthesia department at Willamette Valley Medical Center, a small, community hospital in McMinnville. It's been two months now since I started my new career at WVMC, and it has been every bit as exhilarating and rewarding as I could have dreamed. I have to voice my thanks and give credit, because the SHOI was indispensable both in making my graduate nursing education possible and in steering me toward rural practice.

When I was accepted to the Nurse Anesthesia Program in early 2014, the thrill of "making the cut" and embarking on a new career was quickly muted by the realities of financing graduate school. The cost of a nurse anesthesia degree is considerable. Add to that the fact that it is discouraged (if not impossible) to continue working while in such an intense program, and it becomes downright daunting. After looking at the numbers in all lights and from all angles, the doubt, worry, and frustration were constant: *Is this really a risk worth taking? Will the debt incurred ever be paid off? Should it really cost a small fortune to grow professionally within the healthcare field?*

Thankfully, I applied for and was awarded a scholarship from the Scholars for a Healthy Oregon Initiative. In exchange for the SHOI covering my tuition and fees while in the Nurse Anesthesia Program, I committed to practice in my field at one of Oregon's rural hospitals for a period of time equal to the length of my graduate program plus one year. The financial impact of this award on my family cannot be overstated. I am to this day grateful for and humbled by the opportunities the SHOI has afforded me.

That being said, the benefit of my SHOI scholarship is not only to myself and my family. CDNA.org provided me with the opportunity to attend the National Conference