



## Testimony in Support of HB 3355

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Joint Committee On Ways and Means SubCommittee On Education

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Co-Chairs Monroe, Smith Warner and Members of the Committee:

My name is Diane Solomon. I am a Psychiatric Nurse Practitioner representing ONA. I'm privileged to submit testimony today, as I believe mental health access for all is essential in this state, particularly among marginalized populations and those in rural areas.

In Oregon, we have a mental health crisis. We are one of the few states with the dubious distinction of most citizens with mental health issues *and* least access to care. The Health Resources and Services Administration designates any area with less than one psychiatrist per 30,000 a "mental-health-professional shortage area." In Oregon, that comprises the entire state outside of Portland and Eugene. I have had patients travel from Roseburg, Hood River, and beyond to be seen simply because there were no trained mental health prescribers in their vicinity. I personally lived in Hood River for a decade. One psychiatrist practiced there, and he was mired in scandal and his license suspended!

Meanwhile, while the pool of psychiatrists is diminishing—particularly those willing to work with marginalized or rural populations—evidence proves those who are marginalized often suffer the greatest impact due to social determinants of health, trauma, and abuse. This makes them even more vulnerable to mental health issues such as PTSD, anxiety, and depression. We cannot continue to fail these Oregonians. We must create a safety net, creating civil society that cares for all with an equity lens.

HB 3355 can go far to accomplish this by ensuring adequate training and supervision of psychologists as prescribers. There are not enough psychiatrists—especially working with marginalized or rural populations—to supervise psychologists and help ameliorate the mental health crisis. Nurse practitioners are an evidence-based solution. We garner higher patient satisfaction scores than physicians, and achieve outcomes equal to or better than physician peers. Our patient-centered care results in higher patient compliance rates as well—a critical aspect of successful, sustainable mental health care.

Nurse practitioners tirelessly advocate for those with scarce access to care, the marginalized, the remote, the rural. We supervise physician residents in hospitals, and nurse practitioners in the community. We ensure the patient-centered care that creates successful outcomes.

I urge your support for HB 3355, and its amendment ensuring psychiatric nurse practitioners help develop a strong, compassionate, competent workforce that brings all Oregonians what they deserve—effective mental health treatment, within reach. Thank you.

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