



**To:** House Healthcare Committee

**From:** Tri County Behavioral Health Providers Association

**RE:** OHA Proposed Cuts to Behavioral Health

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Chair Salinas and Members of the House Healthcare committee,

The Tri County Behavioral Health Providers Association is extremely concerned by OHA's proposed reduction in behavioral health funding. The recommended reduction of \$69 million in community behavioral health funding combined with the suggested cut of \$64 million in State Medicaid will result in a loss of \$233 million to our system after accounting for the lost federal Medicaid match. The proposed cuts will undoubtedly have a detrimental impact on Oregon's behavioral health providers and put our state's most vulnerable individuals at risk – TCBHPA cannot stand behind this decision.

Our state faces a difficult and unpredictable future due to the COVID-19 spurred recession. Nevertheless, now is not the time to make cuts to our behavioral health system. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, funding resources to the behavioral health field were in great demand. After years of collaboration between providers and state leaders we have made significant strides to stabilize the system through rate increases, the establishment of new legislative committees, and comprehensive workforce research. It would be tragic to roll back all of our progress during this critical time for Oregonians.

We must keep in mind that behavioral health is different from the other healthcare sectors. While most sectors will eventually return to normal levels of care, the trauma presented from the COVID-19 crisis will exacerbate many of the mental health issues being faced by individuals who deal with addiction and mental illness. We fully expect to see a surge in healthcare utilization, but while most healthcare sectors will benefit financially from the increased volume of patients, our field will not be able to recover solely based on increased utilization.

TCBHPA does not want to see a repeat of the 2008 budget cuts that not only resulted in increased overall health care costs, but also increased emergency room usage. While 2008 was a hard lesson for everyone, it is a constant reminder that reducing funding for our state's safety net services will be devastating to our communities' most vulnerable individuals.

We need the legislature to take action and protect our behavioral health system's critical funding during these trying times. As you move forward, we urge you to partner with our providers and consult with those on the front lines before making major budgetary decisions. For example, an equity lens must be applied so that historically marginalized communities are not disproportionately impacted. We must continue to work collaboratively on the behavioral health issues in the state, just like we have done so many times before.

Our behavioral health system is in desperate need for support during this pandemic - please help us protect vulnerable Oregonians.

Thank you for your consideration,

Tri County Behavioral Health Providers Association

**TCBHPA Members:** Adventist Health, Allied/Acadia Health Services, Asian Health and Services Center, Bridges to Change, Cascadia Behavioral Healthcare, Catholic Charities, Catholic Community Services, Central City Concern, CODA, DePaul Treatment Centers, Kinship House, Legacy Health, Lifeworks Northwest, Lines for Life, Luke-Dorf, Lutheran Community Services, Morrison Child and Family Services, NARA NW, Northwest Family Services, Options, Outside In, Project Quest, Providence Health and Services, Sequoia Mental Health, Telecare Corporation, The NW Catholic Counseling Center, Trillium Family Services, Volunteers of America, Western Psychological, Youth Contact