



## **MEMORANDUM**

To: Senator Lew Frederick, Co-Chair, Joint W&M Subcommittee on Education  
Representative Susan McLain, Co-Chair, Joint W&M Subcommittee on Education  
Members of the Joint Ways & Means Subcommittee on Education

From: Bryan Boehringer, Executive Vice President

Date: April 3, 2019

Re: Testimony in SUPPORT of HB 5024 – OHSU Budget

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The OMA urges your support for full funding of the School of Medicine and the Office of Rural Health at Oregon Health & Science University (OHSU). We understand that resources are tight, but not funding these programs would negatively impact health care education programs that are vital to Oregonians and would only further exacerbates our state's workforce shortage.

OHSU graduates around 160 students per year and operates a nationally recognized program where physician students train with other types of providers and learn how to be part of and lead a health care team.

OHSU ranks 10th in the nation in terms of retaining medical students (52% of OHSU residents and fellows remain in Oregon to practice) and its programs in primary care, family medicine and rural medicine, ranked among the best in the nation, continue to attract students from all over the nation. Oregon's investment in medical education has allowed Oregon to maintain a higher retention rate than the national average and to slowly grow the physician workforce. Without the continued investment from the state to maintain these programs, Oregon's physician workforce is at risk - both to be trained in Oregon and to remain in Oregon.

Investing in tomorrow's medical doctors enables the OHSU School of Medicine to keep tuition rates steady and helps lower overall student debt. In-state tuition for first year medical students at OHSU remains among the highest in the nation (\$41,596 in 2017-18) and Oregon ranks 49th in terms of state support received for their educational mission. Making sure a medical school education is attainable for Oregon residents and attracting students from other states is critical to growing Oregon's physician workforce and ensuring health care access to all Oregonians.

According to the Association of American Medical Colleges 2018 Graduation Questionnaire, medical students face an average medical school debt of \$195,000, up from \$180,000 in 2017. Nearly 95 percent of OHSU graduates have debt, and pressure to pay off that debt can discourage physicians

from practicing in rural and underserved areas where reimbursement rates are lower. Key investments by the Oregon Legislature, such as the Oregon Rural Scholars Program, have shown promise in maintaining this important workforce segment. To date, the Rural Scholars Program has funded 6 medical students who have committed to practice in rural and underserved areas upon graduation. This program, started in 2009, has been an effective recruiting tool for OHSU and has the potential to move the needle on Oregon's workforce shortage. However, this can only happen with continued funds from the Legislature, in addition to other rural incentive programs. Currently, 80% of OHSU's medical students are Oregonians. Creating opportunities for them to stay in Oregon is critical and in 2017, OHSU was able to ensure that 708 cumulative student weeks occurred in rural Oregon.

Recruiting and retaining Oregon-trained physicians also requires a commitment to excellence in education that reflects today's health care environment. OHSU was one of eleven medical schools to receive a grant from the American Medical Association aimed at closing the gap between how medical students are trained and how health care is delivered. The OHSU Curriculum Transformation Initiative continues to prepare today's medical student to practice as part of a team in a health care landscape shaped by genetics, health care reform and technology. OHSU needs the legislature's continued investment in it as the only state public academic health institution to ensure it remains one of the nation's top medical schools. We cannot afford to waver in our state's commitment to health care education.

For the reasons above, the OMA respectfully recommends that the committee approve HB 5024 and fully fund the OHSU School of Medicine and Office of Rural Health budget requests.

**The Oregon Medical Association serves and supports over 8,000 physicians, physician assistants and student members in their efforts to improve the health of all Oregonians. Additional information can be found at [www.theOMA.org](http://www.theOMA.org).**