



**Oregon Health &
Science University
Department of Family
Medicine**

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To: Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Education

From: Joyce Hollander-Rodriguez, M.D.
Program Director, Cascades East Family Medicine Residency
Regional Associate Dean, Klamath Falls
OHSU Campus for Rural Health

Co-Chair Frederick, Co-Chair McLain and members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony that highlights the efforts of the OHSU Campus for Rural Health and its impact on rural health care in Oregon, particularly in Klamath Falls where I live and work.

Rural communities in Oregon face significant challenges to health and access to health care. Mortality rates are higher with increasing levels of rurality and the effect of poverty creates a steeper gradient for health in rural areas compared with urban ones. The disparities between urban areas and rural ones is widening and the 2019 County Health Rankings from the RWJ foundation shows that rural counties in Oregon suffer the worst health outcomes. High rates of poverty, cultural and social factors, educational hurdles, and other factors combine to create barriers to healthy lives. A shortage of health care professionals in rural areas compounds these problems. OHSU is working to address these challenges with the Campus for Rural Health and its rural family medicine residency.

OHSU's Campus for Rural Health brings interprofessional teams of students to rural Oregon so that they can learn and practice community-focused health care. The program provides the foundation for multiple, collaborative training programs and community outreach initiatives that extend OHSU's reach for the mutual benefit of students and rural areas like Klamath Falls. It has brought hundreds of medical, nursing, dentistry, pharmacy and physician assistant students to Klamath Falls since 2015.

Creative new programs, like the Oregon FIRST program, allow medical students interested in rural family medicine to spend a full year of medical school in a rural community like Klamath Falls. One student who will be participating in Oregon FIRST next year grew up in Coquille, Oregon, and then attended Oregon Institute of Technology for college, hearing about OHSU and its residency programs when he was in the premed club there. Now in his third year of medical school, he is preparing to return for a full year with the plan to complete residency in family medicine and return to rural Southern Oregon to serve a community like the one in which he grew up. These pipeline programs allow us to nurture the students from rural areas who want to become doctors

and other health professionals, helping them become the competent workforce that our state needs. Evidence shows that students from a rural background are more likely to practice in rural areas and to work in primary care. The more time they spend in rural and underserved areas in medical school and training, the more likely they are to practice in similar settings. We need to keep supporting these opportunities for students in our state so that the pipeline to practice becomes less leaky and we keep a dedicated workforce to meet the needs of our communities.

The Cascades East Family Medicine Residency Program trains new primary care physicians by providing hands-on experiences to learn from and serve our local community. The program's residents and faculty staff the Cascades East Family Medicine Center, which provides care to about 10,000 community members. Over 150 board certified family physicians have been trained through the program, with more than half of graduating residents deciding to stay and practice medicine in rural Oregon and many recent graduates staying within the Klamath Basin. Overall, about 80% of graduates have gone into rural practice after completing the program, making it one of the most successful rural programs in the nation.

OHSU recognizes the importance of and is committed to creating a vibrant, sustainable health care workforce that provides the highest quality health care to the 96,000 square miles of Oregon. The Campus for Rural Health ensures our students receive training in rural settings so that they can learn and experience the unique health needs of Oregon's rural communities firsthand, giving them the skills and opportunities to better serve our communities in the future.

We are confident that these efforts will maintain and enhance a workforce of highly qualified and rurally-focused providers for our state's rural communities. Thank you for your continued support of OHSU.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Hollander-Rodriguez". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

Joyce Hollander-Rodriguez, M.D.