



February 25, 2020

Chair Wagner, and Members of the Senate Education Committee,

Oregon Health & Science University (OHSU) would like to share its support of HB 4160, which creates a legislative task force to investigate ways to improve student success for underrepresented students in Oregon's higher education institutions.

As Oregon's public university charged with a statewide mission in health and science education, OHSU knows that research on health and health care disparities demonstrates compelling evidence for health care providers and educational institutions to be attentive to cultural diversity, inclusion and competency. Diversity in health education translates into a health care workforce that better understands the connections between socio-cultural factors, and health beliefs and behaviors; thus, training providers who are better able to serve a varied patient population and mitigate health disparities in their local communities.

OHSU has a number of efforts in place to recruit and retain a diverse student body and workforce, and are committed to strengthening that work to provide Oregon with a diverse and culturally competent health care workforce. In the School of Medicine, the percentage of students and trainees identifying with groups underrepresented in medicine ranges from 9 percent in the M.D. program to 14 percent in the graduate medical education program (residents and fellows). Successful initiatives include On Track, the Equity Research Program, the Alliance for Visible Diversity in Science, second-look programs at which diverse candidates are invited to visit and learn more about OHSU, the Diversity Navigators program, and new post-baccalaureate opportunities for diverse students, including the Wy'East pathway in the M.D. program and the Neuroscience Post-Baccalaureate Program for aspiring scientists.

Beyond these institutional efforts, OHSU recognizes there is much more work to be done to ensure accessible pathways for underrepresented students, and a robust, diverse health care workforce in Oregon. The Task Force on Student Success for Underrepresented Students in Higher Education created by HB 4160 would advance critical higher education policy discussions. OHSU welcomes the opportunity to join those conversations, and support evidence-based recommendations that improve the success of underrepresented students in health and science education.

OHSU supports HB 4160, and asks for your consideration and support.

Thank you.