



March 3, 2021

To: House Committee on Behavioral Health

Re: House Bill 2949

Chair Sanchez and Members of the Committee,

My name is Susan Bakewell-Sachs and I am the Vice President for Nursing Affairs at OHSU and Dean of the OHSU School of Nursing. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on HB 2949.

As the state's public teaching hospital, OHSU is supportive of diversifying Oregon's behavioral health workforce to better serve Oregonians, and appreciate the bill's efforts to address the challenge of recruiting and training Black, indigenous, and providers of color to reflect Oregon's BIPOC communities.

Research has shown that health care providers from groups historically underrepresented in health care are more likely to practice in underserved population areas. Diversity in health education translates into more effective and culturally competent health care providers familiar with the connections between sociocultural factors and health beliefs and behaviors, and thus are better prepared to serve a varied patient population.

HB 2949 provides numerous strategies for addressing this need in behavioral health care, including much needed financial support. However, I'd like to bring to your attention that Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioners are not currently included in the bill.

In Oregon, Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioners deliver critically important services, especially to rural and medically underserved populations. Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioners intervene with vulnerable populations and promote mental health across the lifespan. They work with children, adolescents, adults, and seniors in a variety of settings, including community mental health clinics, public health departments, hospitals and outpatient mental health clinics, health maintenance organizations, government facilities, schools of nursing, and independent private practice.

The Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner program at the OHSU School of Nursing has earned a national reputation for its emphasis on primary mental health care. Students study the interaction among biological and neurophysiological vulnerabilities, psychological and developmental factors, and social and physical environmental stressors. Supervised clinical experience is provided primarily in Oregon's community-based agencies and programs.

OHSU graduates approximately 15 Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioners per year and will soon add 6-8 students living in rural Oregon. At any one time, OHSU has 50-60 students enrolled in the three-year program.

Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioners apply advanced knowledge and clinical skills to deliver quality mental health care, and OHSU respectfully requests that you include this critical provider of mental health care in the workforce diversification strategies outlined in HB 2949.

OHSU looks forward to continuing to partner with the Oregon Legislature on efforts to support our BIPOC behavioral health care workers and the communities we serve, and appreciates the opportunity to provide input on this important piece of legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Susan Bakewell-Sachs". The signature is written in a cursive style with a light grey shadow effect behind the text.

Susan Bakewell-Sachs, Ph.D., R.N., F.A.A.N.