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To: Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Education

From: Susan Shugerman, Ed.D.
Assistant Vice Provost, Education Outreach and Collaboration
Director, OHSU Office of Science Education Opportunities

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

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony that highlights the importance of the *On Track OHSU!* program, a health and science pathways outreach program that engages racially diverse middle and high school students in the sciences. I am so proud of this work, which supports OHSU's goals of increasing the diversity in our own schools and programs, and further undergirds the larger state goals of diversifying our healthcare and STEM workforce. This long-term pathways work, built on deep relationships with community partners, is essential if we are to truly serve our state.

As you are well aware, research shows that a diverse health care workforce increases the health of the community. In partnership with communities in Multnomah, Marion, Jefferson, and Klamath counties, we work with students who have been historically excluded from health and science careers, including Black, Latinx, and Native American students. *On Track* establishes linkages to the workforce through hands on experiences that lead to high-wage, high-demand jobs. In the wake of COVID-19 and its unprecedented implications on the health care system, *On Track* is even more critical, as it provides opportunities for students of color to become future providers and care for their own communities.

The *On Track* program has grown substantially over its eight-year history. Even in the current school year, with virtual engagement, we are reaching 3,000 middle school students, 500 high school students, and more than 100 post-secondary students with ongoing engagement with the program. This represents a 2.6-time increase in high school student participation – a true testament to the impacts of our relationship-building efforts that have increased community trust and student interest. In large part, we attribute this success to our community embedded team members who are dedicated to co-creating the *On Track* experience with community partners. The position identifies the assets present in a community and supports community-specific programming. A key component to the role is to work with students as they transition from high school into college, providing ongoing culturally relevant advising for students.

State support would build capacity for these critical community-based positions. Your support would also help us grow opportunities and mentorship for Native American students in the Klamath Falls region (beyond Chiloquin, where our work in the region has focused thus far), and to begin the partnership development work required to create a new *On Track* site in East County, where many Portland-area Black, Native American, and Latinx families live. The model for this partnership will mirror other *On Track* sites by providing its in-depth programming to students in grades 6 -12 and beyond with the support of an embedded Community Liaison.

We know that health disparities decrease when the identities of health care providers reflect those of the population they serve. As we work towards our goal to increase the racial diversity in OHSU schools and programs, we are contributing towards this wider societal benefit. State support is critical to the sustainability of this long-term work and the progress toward our goals of increasing the racial diversity of OHSU's schools and programs, and of the biomedical workforce of our state.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Susan Shugerman". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the word "Respectfully,".

Susan Shugerman, Ed.D.