

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

My name is McKayla Pollard and I am part of the Scholars for a Healthy Oregon Initiative (SHOI). SHOI is an OHSU program that offers full tuition and fees to a select number of students in exchange for at least five years of medical service in a rural or underserved part of Oregon.

I am from Stayton, Oregon, a small rural town of 8,000 people. I then went to college in Monmouth, Oregon at Western Oregon University, another small rural town of 10,000 people. As I grew older, I began to realize there are clinics and providers in these areas, but the problem is they are overworked and often shorthanded. There are many patients with great needs and not enough providers to care for them. I want to be a provider who comes and helps serve this population in these rural parts of our state, the places where I grew up and call home. Having my tuition paid for upfront has made a profound impact on my life. My life is forever changed by this. I am now able to go right into serving the population I care for the most without having to worry about my salary and paying off student loans. The SHOI scholarship is an incredible gift to students each year and it is helping those in the rural parts of the state receive great care from well-educated providers from OHSU.

Rural and underserved areas lack access to care, and without the SHOI program, it would be nearly impossible for underpopulated and underserved areas to attract talented doctors. Coupled with the cost of medical school and the sometimes lower pay in these areas, taking jobs in rural or underserved areas without financial assistance would result in significant debt for providers.

There are hundreds of qualified Oregonians who are willing to serve in rural and underserved Oregon, but if the funding for SHOI is cut, then we know that these areas of our state will feel the effects. As we begin our road to recovery from the pandemic, we cannot afford to leave underserved populations behind.

We urge you to fully fund the Scholars for a Healthy Oregon Initiative so we can continue to serve some of the communities that need it the most.

Sincerely,

McKayla Pollard 2022