

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

My name is Sara 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.

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.

I personally grew up in unincorporated Washington County near Hillsboro, OR, placing me at an ever-evolving intersection of rural and suburban life. In this setting, I witnessed and experienced the impact that medical disparities can have on rural and underserved communities, inspiring me to make healthcare more accessible for all. In order to achieve this goal, I applied for training at the Oregon Health & Science University School of Medicine with the aim to enter primary care. Upon my acceptance to the university, I learned about the SHOI program and the incredible opportunity it provides for students like me who want to aid our underserved communities. Seeing how this program could make primary care a financially feasible option in our current healthcare system, I applied, was accepted, and have been grateful for this scholarship every single day of my medical education. Now that I have graduated and matched into residency at the OHSU Hillsboro Internal Medicine Residency Program, I can see my desired career of serving as a PCP in rural Oregon becoming a reality. I'm thrilled to be in the position I am now because of SHOI and sincerely hope more students have the same opportunity.

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.

I 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,

Sara Hays Archer, MD
Oregon Health & Science University School of Medicine, Class of 2021