

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

My name is Nancy Ferrer 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 four years of medical service in a rural or underserved part of Oregon.

Currently, I live in Klamath Falls and chose to complete the Oregon Health & Sciences University (OHSU) Family Nurse Practitioner program through their distance, satellite program. I am originally from rural Coquille, Oregon. Growing up in a small town gave me the ability to see the first-hand effects of barriers to healthcare that are often faced in rural areas. Some of these barriers included lack of bilingual staff and translation services, financial costs, limited or lack of healthcare coverage, the distance to a clinic, and much more. Growing up I knew I wanted to be a part of changing the way healthcare was delivered in rural areas. For this reason, I chose to pursue a career in healthcare as a nurse practitioner. My dream to become a nurse practitioner was shadowed by the great cost it would be to continue my education after my bachelor's degree. However, through an information session held by OHSU, I came to know about the SHOI scholarship opportunity. The SHOI program has allowed me to pursue both my dream of becoming a nurse practitioner and goal of serving rural, underserved areas. Upon graduation, I plan on serving rural communities with the hope of either returning to my small hometown of Coquille or staying in Klamath County. I am honored and thankful to be a SHOI recipient and am looking forward to serving rural communities in my future practice.

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,

Nancy Ferrer, 2023