

**MEMORANDUM**

To: Senator Lew Frederick, Co-Chair
Representative Susan McLain, Co-Chair
Members of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Education

From: Courtni Dresser, Vice President of Government Relations

Date: May 11, 2021

Re: Statement of support of HB 5528

The Oregon Medical Association urges your support for full funding of the School of Medicine and the Office of Rural Health at Oregon Health & Science University (OHSU). Not funding these programs would negatively impact health care education programs that are vital to Oregonians and would further exacerbate our state's workforce shortage.

OHSU graduates around 160 students per year and operates a nationally recognized program where physician students train with other types of providers and learn how to be part of and lead a health care team. OHSU ranks 10th in the nation in terms of retaining medical students (52% of OHSU residents and fellows remain in Oregon to practice) and its programs in primary care, family medicine and rural medicine, ranked among the best in the nation, continue to attract students from all over the nation.

Oregon's investment in medical education has allowed Oregon to maintain a higher retention rate than the national average and to slowly grow the physician workforce. Without the continued investment from the state to maintain these programs, Oregon's physician workforce is at risk - both to be trained in Oregon and to remain in Oregon. Investing in tomorrow's medical doctors enables the OHSU School of Medicine to keep tuition rates steady and helps lower overall student debt.

According to the Association of American Medical Colleges 2020 Graduation Questionnaire, medical students face an average medical school debt of \$200,000. Debt can discourage physicians from practicing in rural and underserved areas where reimbursement rates are lower.

Key investments by the Oregon Legislature, such as the Oregon Rural Scholars Program, loan forgiveness programs, rural provider tax credit and other incentive programs help to retain Oregon trained providers to stay and practice in Oregon.

Currently, 71% of OHSU's medical students are Oregonians. Creating opportunities for them to stay in Oregon is critical and current OHSU students spend over 640 weeks learning and serving in rural Oregon.



Another key program for on-going training of Oregon clinician workforce is the work of the Oregon ECHO Network. OSHU's partnership and support of ECHO allows for clinicians across the state to create a case-based learning environment through the ease of video connection. During the COVID-19 outbreak, the ECHO programs have provided a place for clinicians to learn best practices on treating and preventing COVID-19 cases.

OHSU needs the legislature's continued investment in it as the only state public academic health institution to ensure it remains one of the nation's top medical schools. We cannot afford to waver in our state's commitment to health care education.

For the reasons above, the OMA respectfully recommends that the committee approve HB 5528 and fully fund the OHSU School of Medicine and Office of Rural Health budget requests.