

HB 4071 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

House Committee On Behavioral Health

Prepared By: Oliver Droppers, LPRO Analyst

Sub-Referral To: Joint Committee On Ways and Means

Meeting Dates: 2/8, 2/10

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Modifies eligibility criteria for financial incentives that support Oregon’s behavioral health workforce to increase access to community-driven, culturally specific and responsive services. Creates a new category of licensed marriage and family therapists and professional counselors, referenced as “associate.” Defines “associate” as an individual working towards licensure and registered for post-degree supervised clinical experience. Declares emergency, effective on passage.

FISCAL: Statement issued - no fiscal impact.

REVENUE: No revenue impact.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Implementation of House Bill 2949 (2021); statutory language; provision of culturally responsive services
- Potential impact on tribal communities
- Timeframe or expiration for new "associate" licensure category

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

No amendment.

BACKGROUND:

The Farley [Report](#) (2019) assessed the behavioral health workforce in Oregon, both licensed and unlicensed providers, indicating that minority populations are underrepresented in all segments of the behavioral health workforce when compared with the racial and ethnic demographics of Oregon's population. The report also found that unlicensed providers are the most racially and ethnically diverse segment of the workforce as compared to licensed providers and licensed prescribers. In 2021, House Bill 2949 allocated \$80 million to the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) to establish grants and other programs to increase and diversify Oregon's behavioral health workforce.

House Bill 2086 (2021) also directed OHA to evaluate the state’s behavioral workforce with a focus on Medicaid funding. OHA contracted with OHSU’s Center for Health Systems Effectiveness. The final [report](#) (Feb. 2022) indicates the following policies and investments may improve Oregon’s behavioral health system:

- Increase practitioner wages and Medicaid reimbursement rates
- Improve reimbursement parity between substance abuse disorder counselors and mental health counselors
- Reduce administrative burden, claims delays, and denials
- Address gaps in training and career advancement opportunities for behavioral health practitioners including tuition reimbursement and loan repayment programs

House Bill 4071 seeks to increase access to behavioral health services that are culturally specific and responsive and creates a new category of licensed marriage and family therapists and professional counselors.