



## Testimony in support of HB 4004 – BH Workforce Stabilization Measure

February 3, 2022

Dear Chair Nosse, Vice Chair Moore Green and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Association of Oregon Community Mental Health Programs (AOCMHP), representing CMHPs statewide, who manage the local behavioral health safety net in their communities and provide a wide array of services for people who are Medicaid eligible, uninsured or underinsured, I am voicing our strong support for HB 4004, an immediate stop gap measure to stabilize our public behavioral health system workforce as we work on longer term solutions.

At this point, I'm sure I don't have to tell you how dire the public behavioral health system workforce crisis is. As the need for behavioral health services has never been greater, at the same time, position vacancy rates have never been higher. Certain units, like crisis services, have as many as 50% of their positions open, some for more than a year. Staff were burned out before the pandemic, but it's reached a tipping point with increased stress, low pay and continued excessive administrative burden.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 4004 to retain our workforce and recruit more clinicians and other workers to fill much needed positions as we work on longer term workforce sustainability measures.

Sincerely,

Cherryl L. Ramirez  
Executive Director, AOCMHP