

Good afternoon, Chairs Holvey and Girod and Committee Members,

My name is Linda Samek, and I am the President of the Southern Oregon Medical Workforce Center. I have been involved with this project since 2018, and I am pleased that we have the opportunity today to remind you of the dire need for additional medical and mental health professionals in southwestern Oregon. An important part of that work is the academic community that will provide the educational programs needed to build this workforce. We envision a collaborative space where multiple colleges and universities will deliver programs that prepare nurses, physical therapists, physician assistants, radiology technicians, social workers, and other healthcare professionals.

Umpqua Community College is a key academic partner that will be able to build on existing programs to provide technicians in areas like occupational therapy, pharmacy, and nursing. They are ready and willing to collaborate with the SOMWC to serve the region. Their clear focus on students from the local community will be key in building a medical workforce that stays in the region to work, raise families, and serve as leaders in southwestern Oregon.

As the president of the SOMWC, I draw on nearly 40 years of higher education experience, half of those as an academic administrator with expertise in program development and academic finance, along with a wide network of colleagues who are interested in participating in this project. I was also born and raised in rural Oregon, and I understand the importance of this project to the community. With this funding from the State of Oregon guaranteed, we will be able to finally launch the SOMWC on a firm foundation with commitments from outstanding academic partners. We would appreciate your commitment to the wellbeing of the people living in Coos, Curry, and Douglas counties and rural areas beyond, who, without this project, will continue to face shortages of healthcare and mental health professionals.

Thank you for your work in your roles as Oregon legislators. We appreciate your dedication to serve Oregonians.