

HB 3274 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

House Committee On Behavioral Health and Health Care

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Sub-Referral To: Joint Committee On Ways and Means

Meeting Dates: 3/21, 3/29

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Requires Southern Oregon University (SOU), subject to appropriation of sufficient moneys, to address state's behavioral and mental health needs by materially increasing number of mental health practitioners who graduate in southern Oregon and teaching behavioral and mental health competencies through alternative academic pathways. Requires SOU to establish fellowship program, increase faculty and staff, and partner with community organizations on pathways for students to work with underserved populations. Appropriates \$2,500,000 General Fund to Higher Education Coordinating Commission for allocation to SOU. Declares emergency, effective on July 1, 2023.

FISCAL: Fiscal impact issued

REVENUE: No revenue impact

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Behavioral health workforce needs in southern Oregon

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

No amendment.

BACKGROUND:

According to Mental Health America, Oregon ranks among the worst states in prevalence of mental illness and access to care. According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting economic recession has increased the prevalence of mental illness and substance use disorder, including increasing the number of adults reporting symptoms of anxiety and depressive disorder from one in ten in 2019 to four in ten in 2021. In 2021, the Oregon legislature invested \$1.35 billion in the state's behavioral health system to improve the state's behavioral health crisis system, support the implementation of Measure 110 (2020), increase access to residential treatment, and support behavioral health workforce recruitment and retention.

House Bill 3274 would appropriate \$2,500,000 to the Higher Education Coordinating Commission for appropriation to Southern Oregon University to increase the number of mental health practitioners who graduate in southern Oregon and teaching behavioral and mental health competencies through alternative academic pathways.