

February 6, 2023

House Committee on Behavioral Health and Health
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court St NE
Salem, OR 97301

Re: Testimony in Support for HB 2485

Chair Nosse and Members of the Committee,

Lines for Life is dedicated to preventing suicide and substance abuse, and promoting mental wellness. Building a behavioral health workforce is a critical part of that work. Accordingly, I write to you on behalf of Lines for Life to offer our support for HB 2485. This bill will enhance mental health and addiction workforce in Oregon. Expanding the program at Portland State University's school of Social Work is vital to meeting the current behavioral health workforce needs in our community and state.

This committee has heard from many stakeholders about the critical need to grow and support our behavioral health workforce. As you know, there is a shortage of public mental health and addiction providers. Without investments in programs that increase our behavioral health workforce we risk further deepening the provider shortage created by the increased demand for behavioral health providers.

Passage of HB 2485 will allow Portland State to take on an additional 100 students a year in their social work program. Currently, over 200 talented and qualified students are turned away due to capacity constraints. The bill will increase the number of faculty and student supports available at Portland State. These additional students will allow Oregon to achieve the promise of Ballot Measure 110 and serve more individuals with behavioral health needs.

HB 2485 represents part of a multi-pronged approach to supporting behavioral health services that will improve our community's overall wellbeing. Oregon's behavioral health system needs this and our community needs this.

I hope you will join us in supporting passage of HB 2485.

Sincerely,

Dwight C. Holton

Dwight C. Holton
Chief Executive Officer
Lines for Life