

March 19, 2023

Representative Rob Nosse
Chair, Behavioral Health and Healthcare Committee
Oregon House of Representatives
900 Court St. NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

Chair Nosse and Members of the Committee;

Thank you for allowing me to provide written testimony today. I appreciate the chance to share with you while I am strongly in support of HB 3274.

I am the Program Officer for the Maslow Project, a non-profit agency serving homeless youth and families in the Jackson and Josephine county areas of Southern Oregon. In that capacity I see firsthand how the Rogue Valley is in need of quality behavioral health supports. While this need is long-standing, it has been made far worse most recently by the devastating wildfires in this region which resulted in a deeper housing loss in an already bleak rental market.

Our agency serves the roughly 2,400 youth and families who are without their own stable housing. We regularly assess that this vulnerable population is plagued by anxiety, depression, acute mental health diagnoses, post traumatic stress, suicidal ideation/attempts, co-occurring diagnoses with substance use, poor coping skills, and highly risky behaviors. Additionally, the cost of living in our area- driven up by wildfire-induced housing shortages – makes it increasingly difficult to attract, hire, and retain quality mental health providers. This makes it even more essential to grow our own behavioral health workforce.

Southern Oregon University offers quality post graduate degree options for those who wish to enter the behavior health field. Additionally, the program has sought out feedback directly from community stakeholders around the applied skills, abilities, best-practices, techniques, and highly sought qualities of their graduates. They have also built a more robust internship system to ensure that students are able to be placed in relevant settings to get started in the field and begin addressing immediate needs in the process.

I ask the committee to vote in support of House Bill 3274, so that we can work together to address this crisis.

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