



March 21, 2023

Dear Committee Members:

I wear two hats in Ashland, Oregon, and both of them give me the ability to comment upon the mental health crisis among our adults and our children, the lack of mental health resources in our community, and the need for increasing the number of trained mental healthcare providers in Jackson County.

As the director of the Southern Oregon University Research Center (SOURCE), I just finished the community needs assessment for Jackson County and am in the midst of the community health assessment for Jackson and Josephine Counties. In conducting interviews and focus groups, as well as administering surveys, we at SOURCE have found that unaddressed mental health issues is one of the highest need areas in the Rogue Valley. We have heard from residents that they cannot find a mental health provider who has the availability to see them. I have talked with mental healthcare providers who are serving fire survivors and are frustrated because there are so many people with unmet mental health needs.

As a director on the Ashland School Board, I hear regularly about the mental healthcare challenges our K-12 students face and the paucity of therapists to serve those vulnerable young people. Our students have been through so much during the pandemic and this has had lasting impact on their levels of anxiety and depression. We are so appreciative of the SIA funding, which has enhanced our district's ability to address students in need. Additional therapists in our schools and in our community would have a significant impact on our children and adolescents.

I would like to urge this committee to move HB 3274 forward so that more mental healthcare training can be made available and the shortage of mental health providers can be alleviated in our region.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Eva Skuratowicz".

Eva Skuratowicz, Ph.D.
Director, Southern Oregon University Research Center