



The League of Women Voters of Oregon, established in 1920, is a grassroots nonpartisan political organization that encourages informed and active participation in government. We envision informed Oregonians participating in a fully accessible, responsive, and transparent government to achieve the common good. LWVOR Legislative Action is based on advocacy positions formed through studies and member consensus. The League never supports or opposes any candidate or political party.

February 6, 2024

To: **Chair Dembrow, Vice Chair Weber, and Members of the [Senate Committee on Education](#)**

Re: **[SB 1592](#) – Expansion of Behavioral Health Workforce – Support**

HB1592 is designed to help address the mental health workforce crisis in Oregon. The League of Women Voters of Oregon supports the bill, because it is consistent with the US League's positions on healthcare:

The League of Women Voters believes that every US resident should have access to a basic level of care that includes mental health care. As public health crises increasingly reveal, a health program should protect the health of its most vulnerable populations, urban and rural, in order to protect the health of everyone.

The need for mental health professionals was highlighted during and after the pandemic. Practically all counties in Oregon [lack a sufficient number of mental health professionals](#), and this is particularly problematic for rural communities.

The shortage prevents people with substance use disorders from obtaining the treatment they need. The Oregon Health Authority and the Alcohol and Drug Policy Commission have identified the need to expand the capacity to assist people with drug addictions – particularly targeting youths and those in need of culturally and linguistically responsive services. The Joint Interim Committee on Addiction and Community Safety heard [their recommendations](#) for expanding and enhancing access to substance use disorder treatment, offering supports to meet regional needs. They mentioned workforce challenges among the barriers to creating a continuum of care.

The League welcomes the proposal to help expand the behavioral health workforce in Oregon, and urges for your support of SB 1592.

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss this legislation.

Handwritten signature of Rebecca L. Gladstone in black ink.

Rebecca Gladstone
Co-President LWVOR

Handwritten signature of Jean W. Pierce in black ink.

Jean Pierce
Social Policy Coordinator