

HB 3129 -1, -2 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

House Committee On Higher Education and Workforce Development

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Sub-Referral To: Joint Committee On Ways and Means

Meeting Dates: 2/25, 3/18

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

The measure establishes the Higher Education Behavioral Health Workforce Expansion Fund and appropriates \$17.9 million to it. The measure requires the Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) to administer the fund and to distribute funding to community colleges and private and public universities using a distribution formula developed in collaboration with an advisory group. It specifies that funds may be spent in certain ways to support behavioral health faculty, students, and programs, including students pursuing specific licenses or certificates. It declares an emergency and takes effect on passage.

Detailed Summary

- Establishes the Higher Education Behavioral Health Workforce Expansion Fund.
- Requires HECC to administer the fund.
- Requires moneys in the fund to be used for expanding the training, employment, and retention of certain professionals in the behavioral health care workforce who can provide culturally responsive behavioral health services to specified populations.
- Requires HECC to distribute moneys from the fund to community colleges and private and public universities to implement programs to expand the behavioral health workforce and specifies the ways in which institutions may use the funding.
- Requires HECC to distribute moneys from the fund to institutions based on a distribution formula developed in consultation with an advisory group.
- Specifies that students pursuing licensure or certification in certain programs are eligible for a scholarship or stipend from institution funding.
- Permits HECC to adopt rules to administer the provisions of the bill.
- Appropriates \$17.9 million to the Higher Education Behavioral Health Workforce Expansion Fund.
- Declares an emergency and takes effect on passage.

Fiscal impact: Fiscal impact issued.

Revenue impact: Revenue impact issued.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Capacity in graduate-level behavioral health programs
- Target populations for culturally responsive services
- Coordination between universities and Governor's Office
- Proposed amendment

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

-1 The amendment changes the appropriation to the Higher Education Behavioral Health Workforce Expansion Fund from \$17.9 million to \$25.7 million.

-2 The amendment allows Oregon Health and Science University to receive funds, requires scholarships to students to include a service obligation of at least two years in the publicly funded behavioral health system, and establishes reporting requirements. It increases the appropriation to the Higher Education Behavioral Health

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Workforce Expansion Fund from \$17.9 million to \$25.7 million.

Detailed Summary

- Adds Oregon Health and Science University to the list of institutions that will receive funds to implement programs to expand the behavioral health workforce.
- Requires scholarships or stipends to students that are funded by the bill to lead to a career in the publicly funded behavioral health system and to include a service obligation of at least two years.
- Modifies language related to allowable uses of funds.
- Modifies language related to membership on the advisory group convened to assist HECC in developing a distribution formula.
- Requires colleges and universities to submit annual reports with specified outcomes to the HECC starting June 30, 2026.
- Requires HECC to submit an annual report, including the information submitted by colleges and universities to the Legislative Assembly starting September 15, 2026.
- Changes the appropriation to the Higher Education Behavioral Health Workforce Expansion Fund from \$17.9 million to \$25.7 million.

BACKGROUND:

In October 2019, Governor Kate Brown established the Governor's Behavioral Health Advisory Council for the purpose of developing recommendations aimed at improving access to effective behavioral health services and supports in Oregon.

In 2021, the Oregon Legislative Assembly passed [House Bill 2086 \(2021\)](#), which implemented recommendations from the Governor's Behavioral Health Advisory Council and required a study of Medicaid rates with recommendations for increasing wages for behavioral health providers. The final [Behavioral Health Workforce Report to the Oregon Health Authority and State Legislature](#), published February 1, 2022, documented a rise in mental illness and substance use among Oregonians, as well as an unmet need for services, particularly in rural areas and among Medicaid enrollees.

[Oregon's Health Care Workforce Needs Assessment 2023](#), prepared by Oregon State University's College of Public Health and Human Services on behalf of the Oregon Health Authority and Oregon Health Policy Board, included research and recent survey data on Oregon's behavioral health providers (pg. 78).

Section 20 of [House Bill 4002 \(2024\)](#) established the United We Heal Medicaid Payment Program to enable participation in a labor-management training trust. The Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industry (BOLI) has published [apprenticeship standards](#) for a [qualified mental health associate \(QMHA\) apprenticeship](#) associated with United We Heal, and is in the process of developing apprenticeship standards for a Qualified Mental Health Professional.

Efforts to support industry-specific workforce development initiatives include the recent Future Ready Oregon package ([Senate Bill 1545 \(2022\)](#)), which funded apprenticeship and preapprenticeship training in health care, manufacturing, and construction, as well as grants to workforce programs in health care, manufacturing, and technology. In subsequent sessions, the Legislative Assembly has passed legislation that created individual funds targeting other industries, including the Oregon Cybersecurity Workforce Development Fund ([House Bill 2049 \(2023\)](#)) and the Semiconductor Talent Sustaining Fund ([House Bill 4154 \(2024\)](#)).