



VANESSA CORNWALL

Intergovernmental Relations Officer
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DATE: March 17, 2025
TO: House Committee on Higher Education and Workforce Development
FROM: Vanessa Cornwall, Lane County Intergovernmental Relations Officer
RE: HB 3129, Relating to Behavioral Health Workforce

Dear Chair Hudson, Vice-Chairs Fragala and Harbick, and Members of the Committee:

Lane County supports HB 3129 and its subsequent amendments. This legislation is a crucial step toward addressing Oregon's behavioral health workforce crisis by establishing the Higher Education Behavioral Health Workforce Expansion Fund. The amendments further strengthen by bill's ability to meet the needs of local communities, including Lane County.

Lane County continues to struggle with a shortage of behavioral health professionals, limiting the county's ability to provide timely and accessible services. The workforce challenges we face disproportionately impact our most vulnerable residents, including individuals with disabilities, veterans, and those experiencing homelessness. HB 3129 provides targeted investments in education and workforce development, ensuring that students and professionals receive the financial and institutional support needed to enter and remain in the field.

The amendments enhance this bill by refining its implementation to maximize impact. Specifically, these amendments:

- Strengthen the funding mechanisms to ensure resources are directed to institutions and programs that demonstrate the greatest need and potential for workforce expansion
- Expand eligibility criteria for scholarships and stipends, increasing access for students pursuing careers in behavioral health
- Clarify the use of funds to support retention, program accreditation, and field supervision, all of which are critical to sustaining a high-quality workforce pipeline

While we strongly support HB 3129 and the subsequent amendments, we respectfully encourage consideration of an additional amendment to ensure that behavioral health training programs grow across the entire geography of the state. Language should be included to ensure that monies are distributed in a way that supports the expansion of behavioral health academic programs outside of the Portland Metro Area. Many rural and mid-sized communities, including Lane County, face significant workforce shortages but lack local training programs to develop and retain professionals. Lane County believes that this geographic equity provision will strengthen this bill's impact for all Oregonians, not just those in the urban core.



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By adopting HB 3129 with these improvements, the Legislature will provide Lane County and other communities with the tools necessary to build a sustainable behavioral health system that meets the needs of our residents.

ELECTRONICALLY SUBMITTED BY VANESSA CORNWALL, LANE COUNTY
INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS OFFICER