

Chair Nosse, Vice-Chairs Javadi and Nelson, and Members of the Committee,

The Fair Shot for All Coalition is in strong support for HB 2203 and HB 2024, which aim to address the critical challenges faced by behavioral health workers in Oregon and strengthen our behavioral health system.

Oregon's behavioral health workforce deserves safe working conditions, fair compensation, and supportive training to deliver the essential care that our loved ones and neighbors need.

Our current behavioral health system is failing both workers and patients, particularly those who rely on the Oregon Health Plan (OHP) for care. Facilities are dangerously understaffed, leading to high-risk situations for workers and limited or no providers in rural communities.

People of color struggle to find care that meets their needs and understands their experiences. As of 2020, **just 4.7%** of Oregon's behavioral health workforce identified as Hispanic or Latino, compared to about **14%** of the state's population that year, according to the [Oregon Health Authority](#). Other populations were also dismally represented. Just 1.3% of behavioral health workers were Black compared to 2.3% of Oregonians. We're losing experienced professionals every day because they can't make ends meet or stay safe at work.

HB 2203 and HB 2024 take important steps to address these challenges and help Oregon meet the demand for behavioral healthcare.

HB 2024 invests \$45M into the behavioral health workforce. It provides \$20 million to OHA for targeted reimbursement increases for behavioral health providers, ensuring fair compensation and retaining workers in communities that need them most. It will also provide funding for training and career advancement opportunities.

HB 2203 implements comprehensive safety standards, written safety plans, and protocols to protect workers and patients, as well as worker rights, reporting options, and trainings to enhance workplace safety.

These bills also support employer changes and compliance by offering grants for risk assessments, requiring newly constructed behavioral health facilities to include worker safety elements in their design, and increasing coordination during enforcement of safety regulations.

We urge you to support HB 2203 and HB 2024 to strengthen our behavioral health system to create, safe, diverse, and fair workplaces and ensure healing is possible for all Oregonians.

