



March 18, 2025

TO: Chair Nosse and members of the House Committee On Behavioral Health & Health Care

FROM: Association of Oregon Counties Legislative Affairs Manager, Jessica Pratt

RE: Support HB 2056-1

Dear Chair Nosse and members of the committee,

On behalf of the Association of Oregon Counties, representing Oregon's county governments, I am writing to urge your support for closing the funding gap for mandated community behavioral health services and HB 2056-1.

County boards of commissioners are the Local Mental Health Authority, with the duty to administer Oregon's mental health policies, adopt a local plan to serve community needs and provide oversight and accountability of our state-county shared services.

Counties partner with the Oregon Health Authority to provide behavioral health services and supports that help our communities thrive and reduce avoidable state hospital stays and involvement with law enforcement and the courts.

Counties and their Community Mental Health Programs are on the front lines responding to Oregon's addiction and homelessness crises and need your help to provide the nimble, on-demand response we all expect.

These crises, along with the federal court order shortening the duration of state hospital stays, have driven a sharp increase in caseloads for county crisis response, aid and assist community restoration and civil commitment services, without additional funding to match the demand. This is happening at the same time that many counties face looming budget shortfalls and may no longer have county general funds available to supplement the shortfalls in federal and state investments as some have been able to do in past bienniums.

It is critical that Oregon close the \$64.8 million state funding gap for these services that counties are statutorily mandated to provide through our Community Mental Health Programs.

This investment will go far to equip our community mental health programs to meet their statutory obligations and to better serve Oregonians with mental health and addictions challenges in the community instead of in our hospitals and jails.

The Association of Oregon Counties asks for your support for the local behavioral health safety net with HB 2056-1 and we thank you for partnering with counties to serve all of Oregon.