



Chair Nosse, Vice-Chairs Javadi and Nelson, and Members of the House Committee on Behavioral Health and Health Care,

Basic Rights Oregon is in strong support of HB 2203 and HB 2024. Behavioral health workers in Oregon deserve safe conditions, fair pay, and supportive training, so they can deliver the care our loved ones and neighbors need.

As a statewide LGBTQ+ advocacy organization, Basic Rights Oregon is deeply invested in securing a mental health workforce that is diverse and equipped to serve the needs of our communities. Transgender and queer Oregonians have many unique mental health needs, and we need a workforce that reflects our identities, and that is safe and financially secure. HB 2203 and 2204 will help us achieve those goals.

The behavioral healthcare workforce faces several challenges:

CHRONICALLY UNSAFE WORK ENVIRONMENTS: High-risk settings like prisons, clinics, and behavioral health facilities lack adequate security and staff, leading to direct safety concerns for workers. Incidents in these areas have left staff feeling vulnerable.

OVERWORK AND BURNOUT = INCREASED RISK AND STAFFING SHORTAGES: Mandatory overtime and excessive workloads increase burnout, time off, and resignations, creating a vicious cycle that workers can't get ahead of. Those who remain say increased exhaustion and despair increase the risk of accidents.

INSUFFICIENT MANAGEMENT AND SECURITY PRESENCE: In many of these positions, management can work from home while workers must be onsite. Limited on-site management and security support result in delayed responses to incidents, especially in high-stress areas. Employees feel exposed and unprotected due to this lack of visible support.

SYSTEMIC SAFETY ISSUES AND POOR COMMUNICATION: Staffing reductions and poor emergency communication exacerbate safety risks. Workers report that leadership often fails to prioritize or promptly address emergent safety concerns, leading to anxiety and a sense of abandonment in hazardous situations.

HB 2203 and HB 2024 take important steps to address these challenges. Please vote "YES" to advance both much-needed bills.

Thank you,
Blair Stenvick (they/he)
Basic Rights Oregon