



Oregon moms and caregivers fighting for gender, economic, and racial justice.

To: House Committee on Behavioral Health and Healthcare
From: Family Forward Oregon
Date: 3/25/2025
RE: In Support of HB 2024

Chair Nosse, Vice-Chair Nelson and Javadi, and members of the committee,

Family Forward Oregon strongly supports House Bill 2024, which would invest in strengthening and diversifying our behavioral health workforce. This legislation is a crucial step toward addressing the instability of our behavioral health system and its negative impact on both workers and patients.

Oregon is struggling to meet the growing demand for mental health and addiction services due to a severe shortage of behavioral health workers, particularly in rural communities and communities of color. Experienced professionals leave the field daily due to inadequate financial compensation, exacerbating the crisis.

The behavioral health workforce in Oregon is plagued by unsustainable working conditions, driving professionals to leave the field for their own safety and well-being. Insufficient security measures and inadequate staff support expose workers to physical and emotional harm, leading to high turnover rates and recruitment challenges. As a result, remaining staff are overburdened, burned out, and exhausted, increasing the risk of accidents. This precarious situation undermines the very industry responsible for supporting the physical, mental, and emotional well-being of Oregonians, highlighting the urgent need for systemic change.

HB 2024 marks a crucial step towards addressing Oregon's behavioral health workforce crisis by investing \$45 million in strengthening and diversifying this critical sector. A key component of this investment is a targeted reimbursement increase of \$20 million, which will be allocated to the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) as incentive payments for providers. This strategic move aims to retain workers in underserved communities, ensuring that those who need care most receive it from dedicated professionals. Additionally, HB 2024 offers training and career advancement opportunities, empowering the workforce to deliver high-quality care while advancing their careers.

Family Forward wholeheartedly supports HB 2024, recognizing that safe working conditions are paramount for a robust and resilient behavioral health workforce. We acknowledge the

systemic shortcomings in our current system, which disproportionately affect rural areas and communities of color. By prioritizing the well-being and support of these essential workers, we can begin to bridge the gaps in care and address the persistent disparities that plague our most vulnerable populations.

We urge you to vote YES on HB 2024 to make substantial investments towards diversifying and strengthening our behavioral health workforce.

Thank you for your consideration.

Selina Biniam

Advocacy Manager
Family Forward Oregon

