



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

On behalf of the Tri-County Behavioral Health Providers Association (TCBHPA), we are writing to express our strong support for HB 2024 with the -3 amendment. This legislation is critical to recruiting and retaining a skilled workforce in Oregon’s behavioral health system. While investments made in previous sessions have been vital in mitigating losses and filling key positions, significant gaps remain.

Oregon is facing a critical shortage of behavioral health professionals. Mental health conditions, particularly among young adults and adolescents, have escalated significantly during and after the pandemic. This mirrors broader national trends, but the need is especially acute in Oregon. According to the Oregon Health Authority, the state ranks fourth in the nation for unmet mental health needs.

These workforce shortages have profound consequences in our communities, including increased caseloads, provider burnout, and limited access to essential services. Public recognition of the connection between behavioral health issues and homelessness further underscores the urgency of providing comprehensive mental health and substance use services to address both homelessness and cycles of addiction.

HB 2024-3 provides critical support for providers who work with individuals facing the most severe behavioral health challenges. The bill directly addresses workforce shortages in both the children’s and adult behavioral health systems by offering targeted incentives, including tuition assistance, housing stipends, and wage increases, which will aid in recruiting and retaining skilled professionals to meet the distinct needs of each population. Additionally, apprenticeship programs will play a vital role in developing a sustainable, skilled workforce committed to long-term service, which will enhance both retention and overall job satisfaction for professionals working with both adults and youth.

We appreciate your leadership in advancing policies that strengthen Oregon’s behavioral health system, and we strongly encourage your support of HB 2024 with the -3 amendment as part of a broader commitment to ensuring access to care for all Oregonians.

Sincerely,

TCBHPA Board of Directors