

Submitter: Lori Normam  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB5006

Dear Co-Chairs Lieber and Sanchez, and Members of the Ways and Means Committee,

I am writing in strong support of funding behavioral healthcare 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 pay, and adequate training to provide essential care. Our current system fails both workers and patients, especially those on the Oregon Health Plan (OHP). Facilities are understaffed, creating high-risk situations and leaving rural areas without providers.

People of color face significant barriers in accessing culturally competent care. As of 2020, only 4.7% of the workforce identified as Hispanic or Latino, compared to 14% of Oregon's population. Other groups, including Black Oregonians, are also underrepresented. Many professionals leave due to low pay and unsafe conditions.

HB 2203 and HB 2024 address these issues. HB 2024 invests \$45M to increase provider reimbursement, support training, and improve worker retention. HB 2203 establishes safety standards, protocols, and protections for workers and patients. These bills also support employer compliance, offering grants for risk assessments, requiring safety features in new facilities, and improving enforcement of safety regulations.

We urge you to support funding for behavioral health workers to strengthen our behavioral health system. This will create safe, diverse, and fair workplaces and ensure healing is possible for all Oregonians.

Sincerely,  
Lori Normam  
Portland, OR