



SENATE MAJORITY OFFICE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 24, 2025

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Oregon Invests to Bolster Behavioral Health Care Workforce

Senate Bill 2024 funds recruitment and retention efforts and adds worker safety rules

SALEM, OR – Oregon has only about 30 percent of the mental health providers the state needs and more than 1.3 million Oregonians live in areas designated by the Department of Health and Human Services as mental health care professional shortage areas.

House Bill 2024, passed in the Oregon Senate today, invests in retention and recruitment programs to grow our state's behavioral health care workforce and sets up safety standards for workers.

The measure creates a grant program to support professionals serving people with acute behavioral health care needs. Urban Indian health programs, opioid treatment programs, clinics serving uninsured people, crisis hotline centers, and other outpatient settings can qualify for grants to fund scholarships, loan forgiveness, and stipends for students headed for the field of behavioral health care. House Bill 2024 also funds an Oregon Health Authority program allowing additional provider organizations to offer enhanced opportunities for apprenticeships, on-the-job training, wraparound services, increased wages, health care benefits and more, all in the interest of recruiting and retaining workers.

"Behavioral health care access depends on a sufficient and sustainable workforce," said **Senator Winsvey Campos (D – Beaverton & Aloha)**, who carried the measure in the Senate. "The bill addresses the chronic staffing shortages that undermine access, particularly for people most in need of services.

The bill also requires behavioral health employers to provide substantial training on risks, emergency protocols, de-escalation techniques, and processes for reporting safety violations to Oregon's Department of Consumer and Business Services.

Two Republicans joined Senate Democrats in supporting HB 2024. It passed the Senate in a vote of 20 to 9 and now goes to Governor Tina Kotek for her signature.

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