



SENATE MAJORITY OFFICE

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Oregon Senators Move to Ease the Behavioral Health Workforce Shortage

Senate Bill 1547 creates new state license for bachelor's degree-level practitioners

SALEM, Ore. – Oregon has a critical shortage of mental health care providers, with 32 of 36 Oregon counties having fewer than one provider per 1,000 residents. Legislation passed in the state Senate today widens the mental health workforce by creating a new license for bachelor's degree holders trained in behavioral health promotion, prevention and brief intervention. This new role can make mental health care more accessible and potentially lower long-term costs by providing help early.

“As I pediatrician, I know that we do not have enough behavioral health providers for youth who are struggling,” said **Senator Lisa Reynolds (D – Portland)**, chair of the Senate Early Childhood and Behavioral Health Committee. “I also know that upstream and early supports go a long way toward preventing more serious behavioral health problems later in life.”

Senate Bill 1547 creates a license for prevention-focused providers with bachelor's degrees and at least 700 hours of supervised applied training. The University of Oregon's Ballmer Institute for Children's Behavioral Health in Portland has educated the state's first graduating classes of students pursuing undergraduate degrees in child behavioral health. The license will authorize their practice in early identification, skills training and support, brief interventions, and culturally responsive services.

Behavioral health and wellness practitioners will work under the oversight of a licensed behavioral or mental health providers in settings like schools, pediatric primary care, community-based organizations, and mental health agencies. Crucially, licensure for this role sets the stage for these services to be reimbursed by private insurance and public programs.

The measure passed in an Oregon Senate vote of 27 to 2, with 10 Republicans joining Democrats in support.

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