

REBUILDING Oregon's health care workforce

The Problem

Like the rest of the country, Oregon is experiencing a health care workforce shortage that began years ago and was dramatically accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

This national workforce shortage and successive waves of patients have combined with Oregon's failing continuum of care to cause capacity challenges in hospitals. Because there is a lack of capacity throughout the continuum of care, hospital patients are often unable to be discharged to a nursing or behavioral health facility, or to another care setting. Without available hospital beds, patients who need to be admitted are instead "boarded" in emergency departments while they wait and patients in outlying areas cannot get transferred for a higher level of care. This combination of challenges has implications for patients, who are not being cared for in the best setting, for hospitals, which are not paid adequately for the care they are providing, and for the health care workforce, which is under stress trying to meet the demand for care in their communities.



We need to rebuild and retain our health care workforce, but Oregon does not train enough of the professionals who are needed. Nursing is one example. The most recent data from nursing education programs show Oregon's nursing programs graduated about 1,800 students during the 2021 school year, which is many fewer RNs than are needed to meet projected demand.



Our solutions

- **Create more clinical placements:** Senate Bill 484 and House Bill 2926 (amendment needed) creates an Oregon Health Authority (OHA) program to provide financial incentives to hospitals that provide clinical training opportunities for students enrolled in nursing education programs.
- **Improve the recruitment and retention of the health care workforce:** Senate Bill 485 and House Bill 2928 (amendment needed) expands the existing Health Care Provider Incentive Program to support RNs and LPNs who practice in hospitals.
- **Support nurses who are willing to educate the future workforce:** Senate Bill 493 and House Bill 2744 (amendment needed) expands the existing Oregon Office of Rural Health's Provider Incentive Program to provide a tax credit to eligible nurse faculty members. This group includes nurse educators, nurse educator associates and adjunct faculty.

Support OAHHS' workforce package

To mitigate our state's capacity crisis and stabilize the health care system, we must take meaningful action to rebuild Oregon's health care workforce. OAHHS' workforce package to incentivize more clinical placements and attract and retain more health care workers

is a significant step in the right direction. We are ready to work collaboratively with legislators and stakeholders to find solutions to the challenges we face.