



## **MEMORANDUM**

To: Sen. Monroe, Co-Chair, Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Education  
Rep. Komp, Co-Chair, Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Education  
Members of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Education

From: Bryan Boehringer, OMA Government Affairs  
Courtnei Dresser, OMA Government Affairs

Date: June 10, 2013

Re: Support for HB 3472A-10

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The Oregon Medical Association is committed to supporting the development and retention of an adequate number of well-educated physicians and physician assistants to meet the health care needs of all Oregonians. We support the -A10 amendments to HB 3472 that create a scholarship fund for eligible students attending any public or private, non-profit medical school in Oregon. Similar to SB 2, the Oregon Rural Scholars program at OHSU, this scholarship provides an affordable avenue for Oregon students pursuing a career as a health care practitioner to practice in rural Oregon immediately upon graduation, for as many years as they received the scholarship plus one. In addition, this scholarship further incentivizes students to choose primary care by reserving a significant portion of the funds for those students.

Health care delivery in rural Oregon has been challenged by low numbers of providers as well as insufficient employment opportunities for providers' spouses and partners. While approximately 40 percent of Oregonians reside in rural areas, data from the Oregon Healthcare Workforce Institute indicates that only 19.9 percent of all physicians in the state practiced in rural Oregon in 2010.

Data from the Oregon Rural Health Association survey found that, on average, access to physicians in rural Oregon is less than half the ratio found in urban areas: 135 physicians per 100,000 patients in rural areas compared to 335 physicians per 100,000 patients in urban parts of the state. If this scholarship is established and funded, it is estimated to bring 20 new primary care providers to rural Oregon each year.

We know that physicians who are trained in Oregon are likely to stay here; this program would not only train students in Oregon: students must be Oregon residents to qualify. Incentivizing medical careers for Oregon health care students ensures that Oregon stays competitive and grows its rural health care workforce. Many health care practitioners, at the end of their medical training, find they are unable to pursue rural health practice due to the overwhelming debt-to-income ratio available to them in rural areas. Students are increasingly finding that, due to their debt levels, they must either choose

higher paying, non-rural jobs or pursue a career in a high paying specialty. Giving students, especially those from rural or underrepresented areas, a mechanism to pursue a career in medicine that eliminates any financial restraints to rural practice, ensures that all Oregonians have access to high quality, safe health care services.

The OMA sees this program as a complimentary program to SB 2 as both these programs incent health care providers to practice in Oregon and help create a more robust health care workforce that meets the health care needs of all Oregonians. This proposal provides more opportunities for students to pursue a career in primary care and rural health and expands funding to a wider array of health care providers.

We urge your support of the next generation of primary care and rural health care practitioners by supporting this proposal.

**The Oregon Medical Association is an organization of over 7,800 physicians, physician assistants, and medical students organized to serve and support physicians in their efforts to improve the health of Oregonians. Additional information can be found at [www.theOMA.org](http://www.theOMA.org).**

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**SERVING AND SUPPORTING PHYSICIANS IN THEIR EFFORTS TO IMPROVE THE HEALTH OF OREGONIANS**