



March 11, 2022

Office of Equity and Inclusion
Attn: THW Health Worker Commission
421 SW Oak St., Suite 750
Portland, OR 97204

Dear THW Health Worker Commission:

Deschutes County Behavioral Health Advisory Board (BHAB) is pleased to provide a letter in support of Central Oregon Community College's (COCC) application to approve a new Peer Support Specialist (PSS) training program in Central Oregon. The BHAB addresses the needs of Deschutes County citizens in the areas of addictions, mental health, and intellectual and developmental disabilities, and Board membership includes a diverse group of both consumers and stakeholders, with over 50% of members having lived experience.

Deschutes County located in Central Oregon has a unique cultural make up of a combination of rural and urban influence. Located approximately 175 miles from Portland, youth and families are often faced with unique obstacles and access to resources when it comes to emotional, and mental wellness. As a community we are vested in expanding our System of Care through strong local partnerships with our Community Based Organizations (CBO) with the goal of creating a culturally relevant Peer Support Specialist training program in Central Oregon. In partnership with two local CBO's of Thrive and National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), and in coordination with the local Community Mental Health Program, and Pacific Source, COCC has been able to coordinate a much needed and valuable local Peer Support Training. This effort, led by local community Peer Support experts will enhance training through shared community resources unique to Central Oregon, focusing on integration of care and honoring in recovery through shared experiences.

The BHAB is excited about this opportunity and strongly supports COCC in their efforts to develop a Peer led and influenced Peer Support Training program in Central Oregon.

Sincerely,

Roger Olson, Board Chair
Deschutes County Behavioral Health Advisory Board