

# *Oregonians for Rural Health*

## **A new path for Southern & Rural Oregon... regional medical college is vital to our future**

Oregon's state economy continues to improve post-recession. Yet, Southern Oregon's economy continues to struggle and lag behind as it has for decades. Our once robust timber industry has dwindled over the last 20 years, resulting in unemployment and poverty rates consistently higher than state and national averages. Federal timber payments that have provided relief are coming to an end soon. And, adding to economic hardships, communities are facing growing shortages of healthcare professionals that limit access to physical and mental health services.

Today, we stand at a crossroads. Innovative solutions are needed to put us on a path toward prosperity and growth. Building a regional medical college in Roseburg to train tomorrow's healthcare workforce will serve as a new economic engine for our region, while helping to ensure access to the critical care Southern Oregon's residents depend on.

### **Ensure Economic Renewal Now**

Oregon's state economy continues to improve post-recession, but widespread disparities in unemployment rates and job growth exist between urban and rural areas. Capitalizing on healthcare's largely "recession proof" vitality will provide jobs, local revenue and greater long-term economic stability. Plus, the college will have a net positive impact on retaining and attracting business to our region by providing well-trained professionals to deliver essential healthcare services.

### **Create Job Training Opportunities**

Southern Oregon is experiencing a large exodus of youth and young families as they leave in search of jobs. Yet, job vacancies exist in a range of healthcare fields and are projected to grow. Low education levels and the lack of training opportunities are part of the problem. The region needs new job training opportunities that give young adults a reason to stay and for others to move to the region.

### **Healthcare job vacancies are increasingly difficult to fill**

Oregon's healthcare industry consistently tops the list of total job vacancies and difficult-to-fill jobs among private industries in the state. Despite the recession, the industry has posted job growth since the 1990s. Yet, job vacancies for nursing assistants, registered nurses and other healthcare positions are becoming increasingly difficult to fill. The reason is largely due to the lack of qualified applicants. Rates of healthcare job vacancies are especially high across Southern Oregon and are expected to worsen as more workers soon retire from the labor force.

### **Reverse Healthcare Shortages & Ensure Access**

Southern Oregon faces growing healthcare provider shortages that limit access to critical care. And, the demand for both physical and mental healthcare is expected to keep growing. Healthcare delivery has steadily increased in recent years as national reforms have connected more individuals with physical and mental services. The number of uninsured Oregonians has dramatically dropped, especially in Southern Oregon. Plus, a "silver tsunami" of soon-to-retire baby boomers with increasing healthcare needs will put an even greater strain on our system. A minimum of 350,000 new healthcare professionals in the college's target medical fields will be needed in the western U.S. by 2022. It is projected that Oregon alone will need over 11,000 new nurses over the next six years.

## **Revitalize Southern Oregon today!**

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