September 2020

Dear Colleagues:

This year, the Oregon Psychiatric Physicians Association celebrates its 54th anniversary as the organization for medical doctors in Oregon specializing in the treatment of mental disorders. Your membership in our organization has greatly helped to promote the profession of psychiatry and to promote excellence in care for our patients. The global COVID-19 pandemic has altered the landscape of psychiatry in profound ways and through it all, you stepped up to meet the needs of Oregonians in a time of intense stress and upheaval. Thank you for your service the most vulnerable people in our state.

We urgently need your support to continue to thrive. Our Political Action Committee (PAC) fund is nearly depleted and needs a big boost to help us prepare for the upcoming session of the Oregon Legislature. Despite a sharp reduction in our contributions to candidates, our PAC fund is at historically low levels at a time when we have been able to be more effective than ever. Please join us today in contributing $500, $250 or $100 to help keep our profession strong in Oregon and to be a voice for our patients.

The 2021 legislative session will be focused on behavioral health. The budget crisis triggered by the pandemic means that instead of investments into our system, we are likely looking at deep cuts to services. We need to support legislative champions for behavioral health in order for them to stand up for us and our patients.

2021 Legislative Priorities
• Telemedicine pay parity
• Decriminalizing mental illness
• Mental health parity/enforcement of existing law
• Behavioral health reform and long-range planning
• Health equity/ improving access for mental health care and services
• Suicide Prevention

Governor Kate Brown has made a commitment to improve access to mental health care, especially for adolescents and people with SPMI. This will be one of her top priorities for her final term in office. In preparation, she has convened a 35-member Behav-
The Oregon Health Advisory Council, charged with developing recommendations to reform the system and present recommendations to the 2021 Legislature. OPPA members Dr. Wil Berry, Dr. Mike Franz and Dr. Jeffrey Eisen serve on the committee.

The Legislature has also established a Senate Mental Health Committee and a House subcommittee on Behavioral Health. In the 2021 session, bills will go forward to develop a 10-year roadmap to improve the mental health system.

Our voice is being heard in the Capitol building. Let’s amplify it and support legislative champions for mental health.

The 2020 short session starts February 3. The OPPA is working with legislators and stakeholders to decriminalize mental illness and improve patient-centered care across the full continuum of services. In the upcoming session, the OPPA will continue to advocate for our members and for our patients. But we need your help.

Your donations to the PAC will help to improve the visibility of OPPA, provide support for legislators who are champions for mental health, and enhance OPPA's ability to influence policies that improve care for our patients and enhance our ability to practice good psychiatric care.

Thank you for your support as we continue to advocate for better mental health care for Oregonians.

Sincerely,

Nicole Cirino M.D., President, OPPA

Stephanie Maya Lopez, M.D., Past President OPPA and Co-Chair, OPPA Legislative Committee

Clara Ruiz M.D., Past President, OPPA and Co-Chair, OPPA Legislative Committee