



Testimony in Support of House Bill 2986

March 26, 2019

House Committee on Health Care

Deborah Riddick

Good afternoon Chair Salinas, Vice Chairs Nosse and Hayden, and members of the committee. My name is Deborah Riddick. I am the Director of Government Relations for the Oregon Nurses Association (ONA). We represent 15,000 registered nurses throughout the state and the Nurse Practitioners of Oregon. The ONA supports HB 2986, which would require OHA and the state's CCOs to partner with regional health equity coalitions to address health disparities for communities of color and to require grant support in furtherance of this work.

Oregon's State Health Assessment 2018, which informs the State's strategic priorities, acknowledges that Oregon has "dramatic differences" in health outcomes and, appropriately, distinguishes this conclusion as "unacceptable." To its credit, the assessment included community input and demonstrates that community engagement is not simply beneficial, it is essential. HB 2986 creates a statutory expectation of community engagement and inclusion, as more than a footnote, and validates community experience. By providing resources and a formal seat at the table, the expertise of our communities of color is valued. The ONA supports HB 2986 because it honors the diversity of our citizenry, respects the life-experiences of communities of color, and formally elevates community perspectives.

America's Health Rankings 2018, recently ranked 42nd in the nation in health disparities; <https://www.americashealthrankings.org/explore/annual/state/OR>. While this news is disappointing, our CCOs are currently incorporating social determinants of health, within their strategic plans, which will help to address health disparities. HB 2986 complements the State's efforts to decrease of health inequities and reinforces a community-values lens as foundational to future health system transformation efforts. Being able to better understand community motivations, barriers, and opportunities will enable the State to craft solutions that are responsive to actual, not perceived, community need. If they build it, they will come.

As someone who has spent the past 20 years working on issues including health disparities and social determinants of health, all across the country, I am qualified to state that the passage of HB 2986 is foundational to the advancement of the State's triple aim and health equity work. So, as you weigh competing budgetary priorities, it would be prudent to consider the long-term health, quality of life, and economic benefits of HB 2986. In doing so, you will demonstrate your commitment to communities of color throughout the state and to addressing the needs outlined in our 2018 assessment.