



Lake District Hospital
Lake Health Clinic
Lake Health Specialty Clinic
Home Health & Hospice
Lake County Public Health
Lake District Wellness Center & Prevention

Re: House Bill 3076 – Community Benefit

Oregon State Legislature
House Committee on Health Care
900 Court St. N.E.
Salem, OR 97301

March 27, 2019

Dear Chairwoman Andrea Salinas and members of the House Committee on Health Care,

Lake Health District’s mission is “to care for our community with respect and compassion through excellence and teamwork.” We take this motto seriously, and we believe that caring for our community means going beyond the traditional health care model to actively engage Lake County residents in improving their own health. We believe this outreach contributes to our community members’ wellness and well-being. We therefore oppose the inflexible and prescriptive changes to community benefit as outlined in House Bill 3076 — and we urge you to oppose it as well.

In the last fiscal year, Lake Health District contributed \$3.2 million via community benefit programs. In a frontier community like ours, 90 miles from stoplights and Starbucks, this is an impressive number. But the real impact isn’t a dollar amount. It’s the health improvements we drive with that funding by responding to Lake County’s unique needs. We conduct community health needs assessments every three years to identify health disparities in our county. We then, in partnership with other organizations and government agencies, use these assessments to develop action plans and funding strategies to address those needs.

One need is access to healthy food, particularly for children. Lake County has one of the highest rates of food insecurity in Oregon. More than a quarter of our youth 18 and younger live below the federal poverty line, including 51.2 percent of all kids under the age of 5. School-age children rely on the breakfasts and lunches available during the school year, but they were on their own during the summer until Lake Health District began sponsoring the USDA Summer Food Service Program in 2017. The program receives federal reimbursement for food and some staff time but operating it would not be possible without the community benefit dollars Lake Health District provides.

When we took on the program, it was the first time in three years summer lunches had been offered in Lakeview because no other entity had the capacity to run it. In its first year, the Outback Strong Summer Lunch Program served 2,373 lunches to all youths 18 and younger. Last year, the program

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served 5,128 lunches. This year, we hope to expand the program to North Lake County, where more than 72 percent of students qualify for free or reduced-price lunches. Lunches follow USDA nutrition guidelines, so in addition to feeding hungry kids, the program ensures the food they're eating is healthy. This will have a long-lasting impact on their overall health and well-being.

In a frontier community like ours, improving health outcomes requires close partnerships with other organizations in Lake County, in our region, and across the state. Through community benefit dollars, Lake Health District has had the opportunity to partner with the Lake County School District and FoodCorps, a national volunteer organization similar to AmeriCorps that brings nutrition education to elementary school children and helps schools incorporate gardens and local food into their cafeterias and classroom curricula. Community benefit dollars support our Community Health Improvement Partnership (CHIP) coordinator, who partners with school districts, primary care clinics, behavioral health providers, public health nurses, the county Extension Service, local nonprofits, and Eastern Oregon Coordinated Care Organization to operate programs designed to increase access to preventive services and help Lake County residents actively pursue health and wellness. These programs include:

- In-school dental screenings, fluoride varnish, and dental sealants for elementary, middle, and high-school children
- Mailing in-home fecal immunochemical tests (FITs) to Oregon Health Plan members to increase access to colorectal cancer screening
- Health fairs for high school students across Lake County to connect them to primary care providers, provide immunizations, screen for depression, and learn about health topics relevant to youth
- Evidence-based self-management programs to help people better manage their chronic conditions, including diabetes and chronic pain

Lake County has seen improvements in health care coverage since the Affordable Care Act's full implementation. Charity care cases are inevitable in a county where 8 percent of people are still uninsured and 1 in 5 people live in poverty. That said, we believe imposing high thresholds for charity care will lead to unintended consequences.

Community benefit is a transparent program that is providing many needed services in our community. Prescriptive policy could result in changes that do not serve our unique needs in Lake County. We urge you to oppose HB 3076 and instead allow hospitals to collaborate on a policy process centered on driving health outcomes.

Thank you for your consideration. Please contact me with any questions about our programs.

Sincerely,



Charles B. Tveit,

CEO

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