

To: House Health Care
From: Alicia Temple, Oregon Law Center
Date: April 2, 2019
Re: Cultural Competency for Health Providers, HB 2011 -1

Chair Salinas and members of the committee:

On behalf of the Oregon Law Center (OLC), I respectfully request your support for HB 2011 to require all health licensing boards to adopt standards for continued education credits specific to cultural competency as a condition of licensure or every other renewal.

OLC is a non-profit organization that provides free legal help to people struggling to make ends meet. Our mission is to achieve justice for low-income communities in Oregon by providing a full range of the highest quality civil legal services. We advocate for our clients and for the services and programs that help them to both overcome poverty and achieve justice. Access to healthcare plays an important role in overcoming poverty. Culturally and linguistically appropriate healthcare is a critical element of true healthcare access.

The Oregon Law Center has long advocated for increased cultural competency. Starting with SB 97 in 2011 and HB 2611 in 2013 which established a framework for the current Oregon Health Authority registry of approved CCCE programs. OHA's recent report on the implementation of HB 2611 shows that take-up of cultural competency requirements has been minimal and additional legislation is necessary.

Cultural competency for service providers is needed because data consistently shows that health disparities continue to exist for culturally and socially diverse groups. According to OHA's Office of Equity and Inclusion, growing evidence shows the effectiveness of cultural competence training for health professionals.

Similarly, legal providers require training to combat the disparities that exist in access to the legal system. The Oregon State Bar requires access to justice credits for bar members in every other reporting cycle. According to the State Bar's Minimum Continuing Legal Education Rules and Regulations, "an activity shall be directly related to the practice of law and designed to educate attorneys to identify and eliminate from the legal profession and from the practice of law barriers to access to justice arising from biases against persons because of race, gender, economic status, creed, color, religion, national origin, disability, age or sexual orientation".

Cultural competency standards should be consistently required for service providers. HB 2011 -1 is necessary to reduce misunderstandings, improve health literacy, and support provider-patient relationships by providing an essential tool to all licensed health professionals.