



February 3, 2020

Dear Chair Doherty, Vice-Chair Alonso Leon, Vice-Chair Helt and Members of the House Committee on Education,

OPCA is a non-profit organization, with a mission to support Oregon's 32 community health centers, also known as federally qualified health centers, in leading the transformation of primary care to achieve health equity for all. Community health centers deliver integrated primary, dental and behavioral health care services, to over 433,000 Oregonians annually. Community health centers are providers within the CCO networks, providing care to Oregon's underserved populations, including one in four Oregon Health Plan members.

We are writing to urge your support of HB 4127 which seeks to remove barriers and improve access to oral health care for underserved Oregonians.

Oregon's community health centers serve patients who often lack adequate access to dental care. Many of their patients suffer with untreated disease, and many more are at risk of disease, often because they don't have access to preventative dental health care and education. Providers and care teams see firsthand how barriers to care can lead to poor health outcomes and increased cost to the healthcare system. We know that individuals who don't receive regular oral health care are at greater risk for missing school, experiencing health complications related to oral health disease, and less likely to maintain jobs and/or stable housing – all leading to downstream health and social complications.

OPCA and health centers believe that education and prevention are the ultimate keys to extending good oral health to those who don't have it. Access to oral health care often has more to do with community factors such as poverty, geography, language and cultural barriers, availability of childcare or transportation.

HB 4127 takes a critical first step in tackling these factors we see in our communities across Oregon. It does this by asking ODE and OHA to collaborate in the development of oral health curriculum standards in our schools, directs OHA to draw down federal grant dollars to support care coordination for school-based dental programs, and ensures our CCO and public health partners can continue to support oral health programs in schools so that children can receive appropriate follow-up care.

We urge your support of this bill as an opportunity to be part of an upstream solution that both improves health outcomes and our communities.

Thank you,

Danielle Sobel, MPH, Policy Director  
Marty Carty, Policy Senior Manager