



**Testimony in Support of House Bill 4161**

February 11, 2020

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 4161, 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 4161 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 4161 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 Oregon 42<sup>nd</sup> 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 4161 complements the State's efforts to decrease 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 have witnessed the positive effects of fully engaged health equity coalitions. The passage of HB 4161 is foundational to the advancement of the State's triple aim and health equity work. It also allows the legislature to reinforce the value of community input associated with this bill.

As you weigh competing budgetary priorities, ONA would urge you to consider the long-term health, quality of life, and economic benefits of HB 4161. Your support of this important bill will demonstrate your commitment to communities of color throughout the state and to addressing the needs outlined in our 2018 assessment.