



February 12, 2020

Re: Letter of Support for HB 4161

Chair Salinas, Vice-Chair Nosse, Vice-Chair Hayden, and Members of the Committee,

Coalition for a Healthy Oregon (COHO) urges your support for HB 4161, which codifies the definition of the Regional Health Equity Coalition (RHEC) model into state law and allows for the expansion of these programs in the future. RHECs are autonomous, community-driven, cross-sector groups that build on the inherent strengths of local communities to identify solutions to improve health equity for communities of color and other marginalized identities.

COHO is an association of five coordinated care organizations (CCOs) that are committed to delivering high-quality, accessible health care to Oregon Health Plan members across the state. We strive to address the root causes of health inequity and improve the health of underrepresented communities. Beyond delivering physical, behavioral, and dental health services, CCOs are empowered to make strategic investments in their communities to improve the social determinants of health. COHO understands that in order to maintain good health, people need more than just great health care: they also need stable housing, food security, and access to community programs among many other things.

For example, in Grants Pass, AllCare Health recognized that the graduation rate for students of color was about 21 percent. To improve this, AllCare Health invested in a graduation coach at a local school district, which increased the graduation rate of students of color from 21 percent to 96 percent in just five short years. Because our CCOs have extensive experience working with underrepresented populations, they can make meaningful and impactful decisions about positive ways to uplift their communities.

HB 4161 has the potential to add new voices and expertise, helping CCOs identify barriers and solutions that might otherwise be missed. Some of the CCOs within our coalition are already served by Regional Health Equity Coalitions, and the community-led conversations that focus on addressing the health inequities experienced by underrepresented communities help our CCOs find and bridge gaps in order to best serve those communities. We look forward to welcoming more RHEC programs into the fold.

Sincerely,

Miranda Miller