

**Testimony of Dr. Leong-Wui Koh, President and CEO of
Northwest Permanente, P.C. (NWP) to the House Interim
Committee on Human Services
January 11, 2022**

Chair Williams and Members of the Committee, for the record my name is Leong-Wui Koh, President and CEO of Northwest Permanente. I have been a family medicine physician for more than 25 years and most recently served as Vice President of Quality, Care Experience, and Patient Safety.

I am pleased to be here today to talk about the importance of Community Information Exchange—or CIE for short—and to provide an update on the robust CIE already in operation in much of Oregon. This CIE is referred to as “Connect Oregon” and is built on the Unite Us technology.

Being healthy is not just a result of high-quality medical care. More than ever, basic human needs like access to safe housing, nutritious food and meaningful social connections are essential to protecting health and wellbeing. To address these needs, we must elevate social health to the same level as physical and mental health—and inspire Oregon, the nation and the world to do the same.

As part of Kaiser Permanente’s Social Health Practice, we are using CIE to identify individuals and families with social needs, connect them to appropriate resources, and support them with navigation and follow up.

Prior to these efforts, frontline providers would often treat patients with complex clinical needs only to discover that their most pressing needs were things like food, transportation, and stable housing. Providers like myself were left with no effective tools to help these patients. Connect Oregon CIE now begins to fill that gap.

Kaiser Permanente and others were on the journey toward social health prior to 2020, but COVID-19 intensified social needs in our communities.

In fact, several Oregon communities implemented CIE pilots for COVID wrap around services and I'd like to share their results:

From February to July 2021, three public health departments (in Clackamas, Deschutes and Marion counties) utilized Connect Oregon CIE to help nearly 1,000 patients with food, housing, utilities and other supports during quarantine or isolation.

The results were striking: Within four days of using Connect Oregon, network partners resolved on average 87% of client cases and had a 98% referral acceptance rate. Families felt immediate impact from this work.

Isabel Dreyfus, Human Services Coordinator at Clackamas County Public Health Department, shared these patient stories, and I quote Isabel here:



A family all tested positive for COVID-19 while their father was on a long-haul truck job. He was unable to return home because he was the sole provider and they could not risk exposing him to COVID-19. We referred this family for wraparound support through Unite Us and we temporarily housed the father in a free shelter with food until the family was through their isolation period. In another story, a mother and her two children were evicted in spite of the eviction moratorium, and we helped them put down the deposit and pay rent through November at their new place.”

– **Isabel Dreyfus**, Human Services Coordinator at Clackamas County Public Health Department

Imagine if we had thousands and thousands of stories like this?

Connect Oregon CIE has been voluntarily adopted by five major health systems, 12 of the 15 Medicaid CCOs, and hundreds of community-based organizations (CBOs), with additional support from 211info and the Oregon Health Leadership Council (OHLC).

Connect Oregon is live in 19 Oregon counties, and throughout 2022, will extend into 35 out of 36 Oregon counties. Thousands of individuals and families have been served by the CIE and new community-based organizations are joining every day.

The benefits of a statewide CIE network are many and include:

- Facilitating cross-sector and cross-agency collaboration;
- Reducing the burden on community-based organizations; and
- Advancing health equity by addressing the root causes of health outcomes, and through targeted investments in communities

As both a frontline physician and CEO of one of the largest medical groups in the state, I ask that you help us reinvigorate our statewide CIE for the benefit of the people of Oregon. If anything, these past two years have shown it is MORE needed now than when we started it.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today.