



March 3, 2021

Senate Committee on Housing and Development
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court St. NE, Salem OR 97301

Re: Health Share Support for SB282

Dear Chair Jama, Vice Chair Linthicum and Members of the Senate Committee on Housing and Development,

Thank you for the opportunity to share Health Share's support for SB282. Health Share is a Coordinated Care Organization (CCO) serving approximately 380,000 Oregon Health Plan (OHP) members in Clackamas, Multnomah, and Washington Counties. We are here to advocate on behalf of our members, who continue to bear a disproportionate burden of the pandemic's economic and health impact on our state.

As Oregon's largest CCO, Health Share takes seriously its responsibility to advocate for the comprehensive quality-of-life needs of our diverse membership. We recognize that health equity, and equity in general, can only be achieved when members of historically underserved and oppressed communities have stable housing alongside barrier-free access to quality health care. The OHP population throughout our state has been amongst those constituencies hardest hit by the recurring waves of catastrophe throughout the past year. Our state has witnessed a steady increase in OHP enrollment throughout this period, as low-income individuals have experienced exponentially higher rates of job loss, lopsided levels of COVID-19 transmission and accumulated staggering amount of debt to keep their households afloat. Imagine facing eviction on top of all of that.

Losing a home is already a financially and emotionally traumatic event to the people impacted. In general, Health Share recognizes that housing insecurity has a direct link to poorer health outcomes. Individuals who lack a stable roof over their head are far less likely to manage chronic physical, behavioral or oral health conditions because their survival is at stake in more pressing arenas of life. Without guaranteeing basic shelter during the pandemic to comfort oneself and secure the wellbeing of loved ones, we risk pushing a population that is already disadvantaged further into a cycle of unmanaged health and debilitating poverty. For this reason, Health Share believes that it is important for a Medicaid organization such as ourselves to establish on the record that stable housing matters and it is intrinsic to achieving health equity.

This crisis has affected everyone, but for those of us with the privilege to have a safety net of employment, savings, or outside assistance, we must acknowledge that COVID-19 has been most cruel to low-income families and communities of color. We are proud to support SB282 as a health care entity committed to elevating the quality of health for the OHP members we are honored to serve.

Sincerely,

James Schroeder, CEO
Health Share of Oregon