



2/3/2021

We are writing this letter in support of SB 70—the bill that will allow Regional Health Equity Coalitions to expand and strengthen community relationships and capacity throughout the State of Oregon.

The Regional Health Equity Coalition model is unique; making it of utmost importance to define RHEC's and recognize their invaluable structure. RHEC's are community-driven, cross-sector groups that center local communities, and their lived experiences. RHEC's advocate for communities of color, and all those facing systemic barriers, inequities, and marginalization. Their model seeks solutions that are sustainable and create long-term positive effects.

Through past and current efforts of EASTERN OREGON HEALTH EQUITY ALLIANCE (EOHEA), we have witnessed the empowerment that is instilled into our communities when they are included in the decision-making process. EOHEA strives to give a voice to all communities that have historically been underserved and underrepresented. Only by engaging community, can real change begin with a lasting effect, that will promote health and prosperity.

During the COVID-19 Pandemic, the disparities that exist across Indian tribes, refugees, immigrants, farmworkers, low-income populations, LGBTQIA+ communities, persons with disabilities, and all people of color were blatant. It has always been of urgency to address these disparities through RHEC's. The pandemic also highlighted the lack of accessibility to information and resources for our communities. RHEC's acknowledge this barrier and have and will continue to work to ensure everyone can access much needed resources in an equitable manner.

RHEC's are independent of government agencies, allowing them to be welcomed in spaces where distrust of government and health systems have been barriers to community members. EOHEA has worked with community to distribute Personal Protective Equipment, information and financial resources for minority-ran businesses in rural Oregon and helped support LPHA's and other non-profits in providing rental/utility and food relief across Eastern Oregon.

SB 70 has been included in the Governor's budget and has received support from the Governors Racial Justice Council. We support this bill because of the urgency to expand RHEC's that will ensure all Oregonians are being represented and served. Supporting this bill will allow RHECs to attain their full potential and maximize their efforts. We hope you will join us in this commitment to our communities.

Sincerely,

Norma Ramirez-Gonzalez  
RHEC Manager- EOHEA