



We are writing this letter in support of SB 70 & HB 2760, two bills that will offer support for Regional Health Equity Coalitions (RHECs) to expand statewide and develop their capacity to support health equity efforts across Oregon. Specifically, this will standardize the Regional Health Equity Coalition model; expand this program to fully fund the existing six RHECs; add four new coalitions; and increase staffing to sufficiently support this important program.

Regional Health Equity Coalitions (RHECs) are autonomous, community-driven, cross-sector groups. The RHEC model works by building on the inherent strengths of local communities to meaningfully involve them in identifying sustainable, long-term, policy, system and environmental solutions to increase health equity for communities of color, and those living at the intersection of race/ethnicity and other marginalized identities.

Community led and driven solutions are crucial in creating culturally appropriate support and actions that truly benefit the communities' actual needs. It empowers and elevates voices of historically underrepresented populations and allows for the development of sustainable solutions and needed systemic change.

The importance of codifying the definition of RHECs is central to this bill. The RHEC model was designed intentionally to ensure that communities most impacted by health inequities were at the forefront of policy, systems and environment change work that impact their communities. These communities include; Oregon's nine federally recognized Tribes, immigrants, refugees, migrant and seasonal farmworkers, low-income populations, persons with disabilities and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning communities in rural and urban areas, with communities of color as the leading priority.

The Wave Foundation is a regular participant in the Gorge Native American Community Partner Collaboration and is honored to listen, learn, and support needs as they are expressed by Tribal Nation communities and Native individuals.

We support the model of RHECs that includes uplifting and centering the impact of structural, institutional, and interpersonal racism on the health and well-being of communities of color. The model also prioritizes meaningful engagement of communities most impacted to lead efforts; and honors community wisdom by ensuring policy and system change solutions build upon community strengths.

The Wave Foundation supports this bill because it will positively contribute towards capacity building within Tribal Nation and Native communities, as well as other communities of color. Additionally, it will further define and solidify the RHEC model and provide more solutions for removing and reducing barriers/obstacles for health and wellness equity.

Sincerely,

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