

May 10, 2021

Testimony regarding SB 741 Renew SB 648 with Amendments

Thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of SB 741.

My name is Ken Wilhelm, I am the Executive Director of United Way of Central Oregon. I have had the privilege of serving in this capacity for thirty-two years. Over all that time there are two developments that, in my opinion, have had the most significant and enduring positive impact on the well-being of the residents of this region: the establishment of the Oregon State University Cascades Campus and the creation of the Central Oregon Health Council (COHC).

It is easy to talk about being innovative and more effective but, it's hard to do. The work of COHC is evidence that it can be done. The collective action approach utilized by the Council has catalyzed efforts of local partners from health, education, public safety, social service, business and private sectors to achieve measurable improvements in health and learning outcomes. The unique structure established by SB 648 has enabled COHC, in partnership with community stakeholders, to foster integration of planning and services and systemic changes that are saving money and yielding better results now and for the future.

I would add that my organization, United Way of Central Oregon, has benefitted greatly from COHC work. The information and data provided by the regional health assessment and health improvement plan was instrumental in our decision to choose reducing trauma and building resilience as our top priority and benchmarking the effectiveness of our efforts. COHC's progressive approach that recognizes the fundamental importance of social determinants in establishing a healthier community aligns tightly with our approach to the work we do and the community investments we make. Their work enhances the impact of our work and we are proud to support theirs.

The COHC model has proven itself through the successful Coordinated Care Organization's performance on Quality Incentive Measures which in turn provides community-based, planful investment in prevention and upstream services that will reduce the need for costly health care interventions later on. Renewal of this authorizing legislation and removal of the sunset provision will allow COHC to continue building on the foundation of its successful work without interruption or disruption. Continuation of COHC in its current structure is critical to continuing this successful collective action work. As a result, Central Oregon will continue to enhance regional health planning and effective resource management and improve health and well-being in our region.

Respectfully

Ken Wilhelm, Executive Director
United Way of Central Oregon
Member – COHC Community Advisory Council