

May 11, 2021

House Committee on Housing
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

Re: Letter of Support – SB291

Dear Chair Fahey, Vice-Chair Campos, Vice-Chair Morgan and Members of the House Committee on Housing:

Thank you for the opportunity to express our support for SB291 – Individualized Assessments for Criminal History. As CCOs and coordinated care providers, we remain collectively dedicated to the delivery of quality, barrier-free health care for Oregon Health Plan (OHP) members in the urban and rural communities we call home. Improving the health of the members we serve remains our top priority, and we write in support of SB291 because we believe it has the potential to make a big difference. By creating a pathway to housing for people living with a criminal record, SB291 will help many OHP members seek out the stable roof that has been missing from their lives. We have no doubt that greater access to stable housing can greatly enhance the health of those we serve.

We believe it is a privilege to coordinate local care for OHP members managing a myriad of challenging and complex health conditions. Every individual that is assigned to our care deserves the attention and resources necessary for them to live a productive life. This is especially true when it comes to ensuring low-income Oregonians complete access to physical, behavioral, and oral health care. Too often, however, the members we serve lack the housing security necessary to maximize the positive impact of the health care benefits we offer. In fact, no population is more at risk of physical and behavioral health decomposition without stable housing than OHP members with criminal histories.

By opening pathways to responsible housing seekers, SB291 would allow CCOs and coordinated care providers to coordinate physical and behavioral health care upstream before a person is at a point of crisis requiring a costly intervention. In a resource-scarce environment, it is important that the investments we make count. Without stable housing, OHP members throughout the state become increasingly susceptible to utilizing high-cost emergency care. Stable housing, especially as it pertains to low-income individuals with criminal histories, has the potential to reduce avoidable emergency department visits as well as in-patient psychiatric admissions.

As the undersigned, we believe that the process for individualized assessments outlined in this bill has the potential to help the members we serve by opening doors. Together, we can improve the population health of OHP members in the home and in the doctor's office. As such, we are proud to endorse SB291.

