



Testimony in Support of House Bill 2585

February 22, 2021

House Committee on Behavioral Health

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Good afternoon Chair Sanchez, Vice Chairs Moore- Green and Nosse, and members of the committee. My name is Deborah Riddick. I am the Director of Government Relations for the Oregon Nurses Association (ONA). We represent 15,000 registered nurses and professional members, and the Nurse Practitioners of Oregon. The ONA supports HB 2585, which would require mental health treatment professionals and programs to ensure that culturally and linguistically affirmative mental health services for individuals who are deaf, deaf-blind, or hard of hearing are provided.

The ONA commends the sponsor of HB 2585 for his acknowledgement that ableness and culture are inseparable human characteristics. Mental health services are best received when providers are authentically engaged with clients as wholly complete individuals. Care is more responsive when treatment aligns with a clients' unique abilities and affirms their cultural practices, and values. Every interaction and mental health service must be grounded in the multiple identities and intersectionality of the clients they are intended to serve. Nowhere is this more important than in the provision of mental health services and supports, where the legacy of stigmatization has multiplied trauma upon trauma.

ONA believes that a more inclusive daily practice and workplace environment will foster behaviors and transform care. Because healthcare practices and cultural norms evolve, codifying requirements ensures that care remains relevant as our responsiveness to diversity continues to advance. We strongly support this as a moral imperative, not as an optional policy proposal. HB 2585's requirements address discriminatory practices that leave many Oregonians unprotected at a time when they are most vulnerable. Oregon residents, your constituents, deserve better. We should do better. You can do better.

HB 2585's requirements, in our opinion, are obvious solutions to care barriers that negatively impacts client outcomes and exacerbate pain and suffering. That patients are able communicate and understand interventions, in a form that promotes adherence, addresses the essential care tenets, under which every practice and provider should adhere with fidelity. Delays in treatment increase costs, work-related absences, and the need to self-medicate. This bill will facilitate care that is in alignment with the quality improvement that is an essential component of our State's expansion of health care access and CCO 2.0 initiatives.

ONA supports HB 2585 because it aligns with our mission to support quality care and healthy communities in the State of Oregon; we hope it aligns with your vision for the state, as well, and that you will support and pass this bill.