



March 2, 2021

To: Oregon Joint Subcommittee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Human Services
From: Janice Garceau, Behavioral Health Director, Deschutes County Health Services
Re: HB 5024; support for behavioral health system funding

Dear Chair Lieber, Chair Nosse and Members of the Subcommittee,

In 2017 Congress launched the Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic (CCBHC) demonstration pilot project, implementing the most robust and forward thinking effort to improve mental health access and outcomes in decades. Oregon has been a participant in that project, and this session a bill (HB 3123) has been brought forward to ensure this program continues through the next biennium.

Strengthening the behavioral health system is critical now. We know that in times of economic distress and national crisis, people experience increased risk for poor mental health outcomes. The COVID 19 pandemic has resulted in increased isolation, loss and stress for Oregonians and the coming year marks a period in which the need for support will be greater than ever. Robust access to behavioral health services will be key during this time of healing and recovery and CCBHCs have gone a long way to increase such access.

What I hope to emphasize to this committee is that the CCBHC program currently provides vital services that will be lost if the program is not extended. For example, in Deschutes County, CCBHC added primary care access at all behavioral health locations, significantly increased peer delivered services, helped support crisis stabilization services and expanded access to the community by 20% and services to veterans by over 700%.

We are also seeing real and meaningful outcomes. Our CCBHC project has reduced ED utilization by 14%, homelessness for those tracked by 12%, and has improved quality of life for those served. Our clients show decreased depression and improved overall functioning.

Without CCBHC funding these gains will be lost.

Support for CCBHC funding will have implications for other areas of the State budget, as the CCBHC project brings Oregon 4 Medicaid dollars for every 1 dollar invested.

As this committee makes decisions about how to ensure we can meet the growing need for behavioral health services, I would ask you to consider CCBHCs as an essential existing program that holds promise for the future of delivering high quality integrated care.

Thank you for your consideration,

Janice Garceau, Behavioral Health Director
(541) 322-7664 / Janice.garceau@deschutes.org