

Memorandum

To: Chair Prusak, Vice Chair Salinas, Vice-Chair Hayden, and members of the House Committee on Health Care



From: Marty Carty, Government Affairs Director, Oregon Primary Care Association

Date: February 2, 2022

Re: Support HB 4052

OPCA is a non-profit organization with a mission to support Oregon's 34 community health centers, also known as federally qualified health centers, in leading the transformation of primary care to achieve health equity for all. Health centers deliver integrated primary, oral and behavioral health care services to over **466,000 Oregonians of which 40% identify as a racial or ethnic minority**. Community health centers are providers within the CCO networks, providing care to some of Oregon's most vulnerable populations, including **one in six Oregon Health Plan members**.

During the 2021 legislative session HR 6, which Declared Racism a Public Health Crisis passed as an initial step in acknowledge our racist history and its current impact on safety, survival, and health for Oregonians. Oregon's history of stealing land from Native American Tribes, Black exclusion laws, and formal racial discrimination in public places is well known but it must also be acknowledged that most of Oregon's institutions— including our schools, state health authority, and health care system were built during this time and established from this singular perspective. This legacy continues today through felony disenfranchisement, mass incarceration, white terrorism, institutional racism, and racism in health care. Racism consistently experienced by Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) communities and Tribes create racial inequities in social, health, economic, legal, and academic outcomes. HR 6 was a critical step toward acknowledging the centrality and intersectionality of racism.

Community health centers are committed to health equity for all, which will not be achievable while our systems, policies, and institutions continue and enforce white supremacy. Institutional racism causes harm, trauma, illness, and death to BIPOC Oregonians and we believe in the need to heal these injustices through urgent action, including impacted communities in decision making, and the equitable redistribution of power and resources. Health inequities are preventable and addressing them provides significant cost savings to health and social systems. More importantly, addressing racism improves health and quality of life for all Oregonians.

It is for the above reasons that OPCA and Oregon's community health centers support HB 4052 and the strategies it brings forward to address a longstanding public health crisis – racism. Oregon's health centers have operated mobile health units in their communities for decades and can attest to the value they bring as community centered solutions to improve access for patients who face economic, neighborhood, racial, language, and cultural barriers. As a critical component to culturally responsive care, mobile clinic staff often reflect the communities they are outreaching. Most importantly, mobile clinic teams work to build lasting relationships that help transition patients into wrap-around primary care and other services at health center sites. This bridge to integrated care and expanded services is essential to improving long term health outcomes.

The community health center model centers patients from the waiting room to the boardroom where health center boards consist of at least 51 percent patients. Therefore, we agree that the only way to ensure the ideas to end institutional racism and uplift strategies for health equity must be directed, informed, and endorsed by BIPOC community through the advisory council and affinity groups established in the bill. Finally, while culturally responsive mobile health units, advisory councils and affinity groups are a good start – they are not enough. This legislature must adequately fund and support these and additional strategies to prevent health conditions that result in inequitable outcomes for BIPOC communities.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of HB 4052. **We respectfully urge you to vote yes on HB 4052 because all Oregonians deserve equal access to health care.**