

**Date: 2/3**

**RE: HB 4004**

Central City Concern (CCC) is a non-profit direct service organization that provides integrated primary and behavioral health care, supportive and affordable housing, and employment services to people impacted by homelessness, poverty and complex health needs in the Tri-County area. Central City Concern operates about 2,100 units of affordable housing, serves 9,000 patients annually through our 13 Federally Qualified Health Centers, makes 1,200 job placements annually and operates social services for the community justice programs in Multnomah and Clackamas counties. **Our programs and properties span Senate Districts 17, 18, 21, 22, 23, 24 and 25; and House Districts 33, 36, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48 and 50**

CCC employs about 1,000 health and human service professionals across over 175 unique programs serving about 14,000 people annually. This work requires investment in a knowledgeable and skilled workforce to deliver effective and high-quality services. One of the key tenants of our [public policy and advocacy agenda](#) is to seek increased funding in contracts and reimbursement rates for health and human services in order to grow and support a multilingual and multicultural workforce needed to deliver high quality social services that are culturally responsive. This is why we are joining dozens and dozens of providers and health care professionals supporting HB 4004.

Starting in early 2020 we started providing protected COVID sick days in addition to regular sick time and earned vacation time each employee is already entitled to. We moved hundreds of people to remote work and stood up a telehealth program in less than two weeks, even though we had never done telehealth before. We provided tens of thousands of items of personal protective equipment and technology supplies to support workers in being safe, but also remaining accessible to the clients we serve, who are some of the most vulnerable people in Oregon. We were able to provide additional pay through COVID stipends earlier in the pandemic. These are exactly the kinds of investments HB 4004 would allow us and other providers to be able to make again this year and go beyond what we have been able to squeeze out of our existing funding.

Illness among our staff, patients and residents has been far below the rates of illness among the general population, thanks to the hard work of the Clinical Standards Team and the COVID Positive Housing Teams. These teams are internal staff who are leading our work on taking care of both staff and clients. Their dedication and leadership have saved lives, without a doubt. Recognizing and rewarding that leadership is essential.



Ultimately, we know we need consistent investment for higher wages for our staff, and we will continue to advocate for appropriate rate structures through local, state and federal budgeting processes as well as in our contract negotiations with agencies. So much during this pandemic response has been one-time, waiting for things to “go back to normal” but this is our normal. Prior to COVID there was already too much uncertainty in consistent investment in behavioral health services. We have needed and still need a permanent scale up in the sustainability and valuing of this work. It is especially concerning to see legislation proposing cuts to ongoing funding through Measure 110 (HB4016-3 and SB1541) while bills like HB 4004 are attempting to stabilize the workforce. Stabilizing the workforce is only the first step. We need both responsive and transformative investments to support sustaining staff and services in the behavioral health sector.

Our staff do incredible work. Check [CCC's blog](#) any time to see new stories of impact and leadership.

Please vote “YES” on HB 4004 to take an immediate step to supporting the amazing work folks are doing to save lives every day!