



## Testimony on HB 4126

February 7, 2022

Dear Chair Holvey, Vice Chair Bonham, Vice Chair Grayber, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Cherryl Ramirez, and I am the Executive Director of the Association of Oregon Community Mental Health Programs (AOCMHP), representing all CMHPs managing the local behavioral health safety net statewide. CMHPs provide mental health and substance use disorder services for people with OHP, and those who are un- or underinsured.

As way of background, roughly half of the CMHPs in Oregon are county departments, and the other half are private not-for-profits. CMHPs employ more than four thousand, dedicated, hard-working Oregonians. Many CMHPs have a unionized workforce of behavioral health professionals and work collaboratively with their union partners to ensure that the people delivering these critical services are supported.

We appreciate the intention of HB 4126 and are fully supportive of workers exercising their right to organize without being deterred by their employer. However, we are concerned about the potential unintended consequences of HB 4126 at a time when our fragile public behavioral health system is facing unprecedented challenges.

Having not known of the bill until it was introduced, and not having had a chance to closely review the recent amendments, we are left scrambling to interpret what its passage might mean for our system. The language of the bill is legally complex, and the practical implications are unclear. To this point, my understanding is that Multnomah County's labor harmony agreement took a long time to work through this process. And New Jersey's similar legislation required significant work on the back end because the delivery system was not involved in crafting the bill that was introduced in that state.

Therefore, I would rather see us do the work on the front end before passing legislation and ask for a process that includes system partners and legal experts. That way, we can ensure we are passing the right policy to protect workers and preserve our system so that the people we serve do not lose access to the services they need.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our perspective on HB 4126.

Sincerely,

Cherryl L. Ramirez  
Executive Director, AOCMHP