

TRAVIS NELSON
STATE REPRESENTATIVE
HOUSE DISTRICT 44
NORTH/NORTHEAST PORTLAND



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Testimony in Support of House Bill 2925

March 1, 2023

Chair Nosse, Vice-Chair Goodwin,

For the record, I am Travis Nelson – the State Representative for House District 44 and a Registered Nurse. Committee members, I am here today in support of House Bill 2925. Before I was a State Representative, I was a member of the Oregon Health Equity Task Force that worked on declaring racism a public health crisis with the goal of devising short- and long-term solutions to addressing health disparities in Oregon.

Representative Salinas who is now representing Oregon’s sixth congressional district brought forward House Resolution 6 in 2021 which declared racism as a public health crisis. In 2022, I worked with her on House Bill 4052. That bill did two things:

1. It established affinity group task forces to investigate ways that Oregon could, through specific programs, address racism and other social determinants of health.
2. The creation of a pilot program with two culturally and linguistically specific mobile health units.

After HB 4052 was passed, my office and I attended weekly meetings on the implementation of this legislation. Through these meetings and the implementation, issues with the timeline began to emerge.

The Oregon Advocacy Commission Office was tasked with setting up the affinity group task forces and assisting them with recommendations to the Oregon Health Authority and Legislature. However, this was the first time that OACO had been tasked with this type of responsibility. OACO is a very small agency with only a few staff members. HB 4052 gave OACO extra staffing capacity, but those positions needed to be filled. We have all heard about the struggles of hiring new employees in this climate. Once they began dialogue with people in the community, they quickly realized that there was not enough time for adequate engagement with different cultures, different languages, and from different geographic regions before the June 30, 2023 end date for the program. The OACO, while recognizing this difficulty, has done great work to further this program over the past year, and the committee will hear more about that from their Health Equity Advisory Leaders shortly.

In the initial timeline for HB 4052, the affinity group task forces are to report in June of this year if they should continue their work and have a report due to the legislature in November 2023 with their recommendations. OHA will be continuing their work on the mobile health units with a report in June of 2026. House Bill 2925 will extend the timelines for the affinity groups and OACO to better align with the timeline given to OHA for their work on the mobile health units. This will allow for oversight of the OHA process and better engagement with the legislative process for people who have firsthand knowledge of the racial disparities in our health care system.

I believe that the OACO has done their best in implementing this task, but the original timelines were unrealistic. I believe that HB 2925 is more of a technical fix that addresses issues in the implementation of a process deserving of time for proper engagement with people who have been left out of the conversation on

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health care for too long. Members from OACO are here if you have any questions for them. I urge you to support HB 2925 so we can continue this important work.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Travis Nelson".

State Representative Travis Nelson
House District 44, North/NE Portland