

DATE: March 20, 2023
TO: House Committee on Behavioral Health and healthcare
FROM: Moira Bowman, Director of Advocacy
RE: Support HB 2002, Reproductive Health and Access to Care



Chair Nosse, Vice-Chairs Goodwin and Nelson, and members of the committee,

Oregon Food Bank's mission is to eliminate hunger and its root causes. We pursue this goal in two key ways: we foster community connections to help people access nutritious food today, and we advocate to change policies that drive hunger and poverty.

Access to reproductive healthcare is critical to addressing poverty and food insecurity in our communities.

At Oregon Food Bank, our day-to-day decisions center the experiences, leadership, and needs of communities that face disproportionate hunger and poverty – and **we know that hunger and poverty are outcomes of a lack of access to reproductive healthcare.** Studies show that [people who seek and are unable to access abortion care are more likely to spend years living in poverty](#) than people who access care. New restrictions on reproductive healthcare resulting from the U.S. Supreme Court decision to overturn *Roe v. Wade* will [place a significant strain on hundreds of thousands of families facing food insecurity nationwide](#).

Similarly, lack of access to gender affirming healthcare poses great personal and financial risks to community members seeking care – and forces people to make impossible choices between accessing vital healthcare and putting food on the table. Single moms and transgender people experience some of the highest rates of food insecurity in Oregon – especially if those of us who are Black, Indigenous or a Person of Color. [People who experience discrimination and bias in healthcare avoid seeking care when they need it, leading to long term costly consequences for well-being, financial stability and food security](#). Expanding access to bias-free and competent healthcare is a critical intervention against hunger and poverty.

Everyone deserves access to high quality healthcare – no matter who we are, where we live, or how much money we make. In Oregon, access to the full spectrum of care is particularly hard east of the Cascades – forcing people to travel long distances and spend additional resources to get the healthcare they need. We need action like the investments made by the Reproductive Health Equity Fund to increase access to healthcare in the under-resourced, rural and small town Oregon.

Reproductive Health & Access to Care (HB 2002) would address these growing disparities by ensuring Oregonians get the life-saving care we need.

This bill represents the priorities established by the Reproductive Health and Access to Care Work Group, which was formed to ensure a more just and equitable healthcare system. The Work Group conducted extensive research and discussion over six weeks – and included more than 80 stakeholders representing local community organizations, providers, national legal experts, patients, clinics, and advocates. Together, the Work Group identified barriers for patients seeking care;

the challenges healthcare providers face in delivering care; and the potential legal issues patients and providers may face. The resulting priorities include:

- **Protecting Providers and Health Centers**
 - Protecting providers' ability to provide care to all patients who seek gender affirming care and reproductive healthcare in Oregon
 - Preventing interference with healthcare centers and protecting providers from harassment and abuse
 - Ensuring the confidentiality and privacy of providers is protected
- **Expanding Access to Care**
 - Closing gaps in: insurance coverage for gender affirming care, contraception access on the Oregon Health Plan, and reproductive healthcare services at public universities
 - Enhancing access to care in medically-underserved regions (i.e., rural communities) through a pilot mobile health clinic program
 - Addressing reproductive healthcare deserts by expanding services at existing health centers at public institutions
- **Ensuring Fundamental Rights**
 - Protecting individuals from prosecution for seeking or supporting reproductive and gender affirming care that is legal in our state
 - Codifying the right to the full spectrum of reproductive care
 - Preventing individuals from being criminalized for any pregnancy outcome

Access to the full range of reproductive and gender-affirming healthcare is a human right.

Full access allows patients to be better informed and prepared when making deeply personal, life-changing, and complex decisions about our health and the health of our families – in conversation with the people we trust and our healthcare providers. And the cost of doing so is minimal; our neighbors in Washington enacted very similar legislation to this bill in 2021, and there has been very little fiscal impact to the state.

We urge you to support HB 2002 to ensure all Oregonians can access high quality, life-saving healthcare.

Oregon Food Bank
Headquarters /
Metro Services
7900 NE 33rd Drive
Portland, OR 97211
503-282-0555

Oregon Food Bank
Washington County
Services
1870 NW 173rd Ave
Beaverton, OR 97006
503-439-6510

Oregon Food Bank
Tillamook County
Services
PO Box 1344
Tillamook, OR 97141
503-842-3154

Oregon Food Bank
Southeast Oregon
Services
773 S Oregon Street
Ontario, OR 97914
541-889-9206

Columbia Gorge
Food Bank
3525 Crates Way
The Dalles, OR 97058
541-370-2333

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