



H · O · R · S · E · S · O · N · T · H · E · R · A · N · C · H

Heal Overcome Reconnect Strengthen Educate Support

Dear Senator Campos, Representative Valderrama and members of the committee,

My name is Darcy Bedortha, I am the Director of the non-profit **HORSES on the Ranch**. We are a Prineville-based organization, providing integrated and inclusive equine-assisted and trauma-informed psychotherapy to people in Crook County and Central Oregon. Prineville is a beautiful place in the heart of this great state, but as a rural community, resources to meet the needs of people in crisis are stretched thin or non-existent. This is particularly true for our marginalized and underserved neighbors.

We are 2022 recipients of Health Equity funding from Oregon Health Authority. This funding profoundly impacted our ability to serve our rural community by enabling us to onboard additional mental health professionals and peer support personnel, greatly expanding our capacity to meet the needs of the underserved. It provided funding for programming to support youth who are in residential treatment for substance use. Over the past 8 months we have served 20 residential youth in a weekly equine-assisted, nature-based therapy program at the ranch. This funding also enabled us to provide Guest Artist instruction and materials for integrative, therapeutic art activities, not only to our regularly scheduled residential youth, but also to a group of LGBTQ youth in our community.

Because of the Health Equity funding, we were able to reach three of our long-held goals this year. First, we launched a veteran-led, veteran-specific support group we call Serving Coffee that meets on two Friday mornings each month. We also began weekly services for women in recovery to support women in the community who are working to regain and retain their sobriety and freedom from substance use. With additional funding, it is our goal to offer the same to men in our community who need guidance and support. And finally, we are offering a support and enrichment group for adolescent girls, identified by the school counselling and leadership team, in critical need of extra help to stay healthy and safe.

In addition to the work above, because of the funding support from Oregon Health Authority, we have two wellness retreats scheduled for late spring and early summer. Our first is an Adult Wellness retreat, which will offer skill building for stress management and tools to help mitigate the impacts of depression and anxiety in healthy ways. Our second is focused on navigating and recovering from the impacts of grief on health, wellness and safety.

OHA's request for \$286M above current service level will allow continued funding for community based organizations like ours to maintain and expand this important and lifesaving work. We know that the \$100M included in OHA Public Health Modernization Budget specific to CBOs like ours will allow HORSES on the Ranch and our colleagues across the state to continue serving as a lifeline to the marginalized and underserved members of our communities.

We are proud to be a member of the Community Health Equity Coalition, consisting of more than 80 community-based organizations who are collectively responding to the public health needs of more than 500,000 Oregonians. And we are profoundly grateful for the funding support that has allowed us to expand our capacity to offer these life-saving services to our neighbors in need. Please support SB 5525.

Sincerely,

Darcy Bedortha, MS, MA
Director, HORSES on the Ranch



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The Global Standard for Equine Assisted
Psychotherapy & Personal Development

HORSEsontheRanch.org