

Submitter: Tim Buckley

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Health Care

Measure: SB1074

Many of the Community Health Workers in Salem (and elsewhere, I suspect) are entry-level professionals who operate an important service and get paid very little. They are often well educated (high school degree and beyond) and many are bilingual. Two things are important here: first, they find traction in the community more quickly because of their cultural and linguistic commonalities. They often live in the neighborhoods they serve, thus are trusted individuals. Trust is a key ingredient when hoping to gain access to medical and mental health treatment.

The second important point is that the cost to employ Community Health Workers is far less than to wait further for a medical crisis and then invoke the cost of ER care.

Requiring a diagnosis from a medical or mental health specialist before allowing billable services by Community Health Workers is backwards, in my opinion. These caring and capable people must be seen as a way to access quality care quickly while also keeping the cost of health care down.