

Memorandum

To: Chair Lieber, Vice-Chair Knopp, and Members of the Senate Committee on Rules

From: Marty Carty, Director of Governmental Affairs, the Oregon Primary Care Association

Date: April 25, 2023

Re: Senate Joint Resolution 33

On behalf of the Oregon Primary Care Association (OPCA), we respectfully request your support for Senate Joint Resolution 33. We write today specifically in support of protections for gender affirming health care.

OPCA is a non-profit organization, with a mission to support Oregon's 34 Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs), also known as Community Health Centers (CHCs), in leading the transformation of primary care to achieve health equity for all. Community health centers deliver high-quality integrated medical, dental, and behavioral health services to **436,000 — or one in 10 — Oregonians**. Community Health Centers provide care to some of Oregon's most vulnerable populations, including **one in four Oregon Health Plan members**.

Additionally, the vast majority of our members provide gender affirming care to their patients as a standard of care. FQHCs provide care to all people, regardless of insurance, ability to pay, and where they were born – anyone who walks through their door will receive care. Many communities who have been historically disenfranchised from high-quality, integrative medical care seek services at FQHCs for this reason, including a disproportionate number of people seeking gender affirming care. [1% of all patients seen at health centers](#) self-identify as transgender – while this number may seem small, it is almost [double the national average](#) of all people who self-identify as transgender, as well as nearly double the Oregon state average of adults who self-identify as transgender. Even if patients do not self-identify as transgender, they may be receiving gender affirming care. This type of care occurs along [a broad spectrum](#) ranging from mental health counselling to changing gender presentation to receiving hormone therapy.

FQHCs like [OHSU Richmond](#) are on the forefront of integrating gender affirming primary care into their service delivery, but these steps towards equity are not limited to the Portland metro area. In central Oregon, Mosaic Community Health provides comprehensive care for all, including [gender affirming care](#). These services include an individual care plan for each patient and are aligned with their mission of trusted quality care, with compassion and support for all. FQHCs excel at patient-centered, holistic, team-based care and are uniquely situated to meet the needs of gender-diverse Oregonians, in every community.

Gender affirming care for youth and adults is widely accepted as the standard of care. The [World Professional Association for Transgender Health](#) sets these standards based on

evidence-based research for supporting the holistic health and well-being of gender diverse people. Access to appropriate care not only supports individual health but also breaks down cultural stigmas and barriers which systemically prevent people from seeking support. The [American Medical Association](#) has published numerous studies demonstrating both the short-term and long-term health benefits of receiving gender affirming care, specifically in mental health. Young adults who received gender affirming care experienced a substantial reduction in incidence of depression and suicidality when compared to peers who, when exhibiting the same health needs, did not receive the same standard of care. This care is exceptionally well-delivered in a multidisciplinary, integrative setting, like a Federally Qualified Health Center. As we work together to meet the State's health equity goals, it is vital to protect the care that exists and destigmatize the experiences of those seeking it.

The [Oregon Medical Association](#) (OMA) maintains a strong stance of protection towards patient and provider rights to engage in gender affirming care. SJR 33 and its subsequent ballot measure would, upon passage, prohibit discrimination towards providers and patients engaged in gender affirming care, in line with the OMA's Statement on Gender Affirming Care. As many FQHC providers are members of the OMA, we stand by this statement and support equitable access to expansive, medically appropriated gender affirming care. This care is lifesaving, and we hope the legislature moves to support SJR 33.