

Submitter: Chris Alftine
On Behalf Of: La Clinica Acute Care Clinic
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On Capital Construction
Measure: HB5030

May 3, 2023

Joint Committee on Ways and Means
Oregon State Legislature
Salem, OR
Re: SB 5506

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Dear Committee Members,

I serve La Clinica's Chief Medical Officer and am writing in support of our Acute Care Clinic project to expand urgent care services in Jackson County. Our community has recently seen the closure of a significant number of its urgent care facilities causing our patients to seek resource intensive and expensive emergency room services for issues that could be easily handled in a clinic setting. I've seen first-hand how the effects of COVID and our regional wildfires have exacerbated the impact of lack of access to healthcare for our most vulnerable. We need to do something about this for our patients in Southern Oregon.

La Clinica's target population is 77,113 residents who earn lower incomes. This represents 35% of our community who cannot afford the high cost of emergency room care for non-emergency reasons.

In all, this project will benefit our community in the following ways:

1. Help prepare Jackson County to respond to future COVID outbreaks, as well as other infectious diseases.
2. Provide an affordable alternative to emergency department visits to reduce overall costs and prevent large medical care debt.
3. Provide more same-day, walk-in appointments for working folks who can't always plan their appointments and put off needed care.
4. Provide x-ray and ultrasound diagnostic services at an affordable price.
5. Provide prescription drugs at an affordable price.
6. Serve the residents of nearby emergency housing shelters at the City of Medford Navigation site and Urban Campground.
7. Provide an entry point for La Clinica's behavioral health, dental health, and

wellness services to community members who are uninsured for these services. To improve our health system, La Clinica will remodel an existing 2,728 square-foot building that currently serves as their temporary Acute Care Clinic to add a processing lab and a retail pharmacy with drive-up capabilities. Both services will reduce the cost of care and improve health outcomes.

- According to the AARP Public Policy Institute, the average annual retail cost of drug therapy for prescription drugs in 2017 was almost \$20,000 per year. Low-income families and those on a fixed income must frequently choose between their health and affording other basic needs.

This project will also enable La Clinica to build a new 7,038 square-foot Acute Care Clinic to house twelve exam rooms, x-ray, and ultrasound services. This clinic will serve as La Clinica emergency response site.

- To limit airborne infections, two exam rooms will have designated HVAC systems and heavy-duty exhaust fans.
- The site will include solar and generator capabilities to operate during power outages.

For nearly thirty-five years, La Clinica has provided and continues to provide health care services in Jackson County, especially for residents who most need care. Over the years, La Clinica has increased its health care services, in terms of both facilities and types of care, and this project will continue that tradition.

I strongly encourage funding this improvement to our health system. This is a great opportunity to improve the health of our community and reduce the cost of health care for everyone.

If you have any questions, please contact me at calftine@laclinicahealth.org.

Sincerely,

Chris Alftine, MD