



February 6, 2024

To: House Committee on Behavioral Health and Health Care

From: Emerson Hamlin, Political Organizer, Oregon Nurses Association

Re: Support for HB 4092

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

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on behalf of the Oregon Nurses Association. The Oregon Nurses Association (ONA) is a professional association and labor union representing over 17,000 nurses and healthcare professionals across Oregon. Our members work in urban and rural hospitals, clinics, school-based health centers, home health, and county health departments across Oregon.

Our nurses and clinicians consistently report being overwhelmed by the number of patients experiencing mental and behavioral health crises. This is true for our members who provide care in behavioral health-specific settings, such as Unity, but it is also true for nurses and clinicians working with generalized populations. Our members do their best to serve all patients, but they consistently tell us that there are not enough resources to meet the level of need communities are experiencing.

ONA members are not alone: our state's mental and behavioral health crisis impacts consumers of all demographics, and providers across all care settings. Community mental health programs (CMHPs) have been particularly impacted, as they serve Oregon's most vulnerable community members, many of whom lack resources and live with significant mental and behavioral health challenges. Furthermore, behavioral health workers within CMHPs report that their jobs are made harder due to the administrative requirements placed upon them. These burdens exacerbated by a lack of clarity in roles and responsibilities among various governmental and non-governmental entities active in providing behavioral health services.

HB 4092 takes steps to establish clarity and determine necessary funding for CMHPs. The taskforce outlined in the bill will establish an integrated framework of care, which will reduce administrative burdens on behavioral health workers and increase patient access. Additionally, it establishes consistent cost analyses, so that our state can make better-informed budgeting decisions. Both pieces of this bill are critical to better support behavioral health workers, their patients, and the entirety of our health system. ONA urges a yes vote on HB 4092. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Emerson Hamlin