

Date: March 6, 2024

To: Joint Committee on Ways and Means

From: Dane Zahner, 371 Upper Ridege Road, Oakland OR 97462

541-968-2866, email danezahner@gmail.com

RE: Support SB 5701, RHEC Program Expansion Request

Co-Chair Girod, Co-Chair Holvey, and members of the Capitol Construction Subcommittee,

My name is Dane Zahner and I am writing to ask you to support SB 5701, which is an OHA Budget request to continue to support the Regional Health Equity Coalition, RHECs, budget allocation.

As a Regional Health Equity Coalition, are autonomous, community-led coalitions that come together to identify what the most pressing health equity issues are for their communities, and create policy and system changes needed to address health inequities. Currently, Oregon has 9 RHECs across the state that serve 19 counties and the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs.

RHECs have responded to communities' calls by advocating for legislative bills including investments in Oregon's Medicaid Waiver, Declaring Racism as a Public Health Crisis, Reproductive Health Equity Act, and Medicaid Waiver Renewal advocacy at the policy level. They have also responded to emergencies during COVID-19, wildfires, and wildfire recovery.

RHECs are crucial as a bridge between the healthcare system and communities. They cannot continue to do their work without being properly funded. Having worked with the RHEC is has help fill a critical void our rural communities. They have helped raise awareness and understanding of the gaps in our communities so we can come up with valid solutions to overcome them.

The Capital Construction Subcommittee has the opportunity to support health equity work by funding SB 5701. We ask that you support it so RHECs can continue to address health inequities which can improve health and quality of life for Oregonians across the state.

Sincerely,

Dane Zahner

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