

South Coast Health Equity Coalition

Serving Coos & Curry County
1934 Newmark St, Suite B
North Bend, OR 97459



Dear Members of the House Judiciary Committee,

My name is Jess Howell, and I am the Advocacy Coordinator with the South Coast Health Equity Coalition, serving Coos and Curry Counties. We work directly with BIPOC, Two-Spirit, and LGBTQIA+ communities to address barriers to healthcare and support community-driven efforts that promote health, dignity, and well-being. I want to share what I've seen firsthand in our rural coastal communities and why HB 4088 matters so much to the people we serve.

I appreciate the opportunity to comment in support of HB 4088 which will address the privacy concerns of the communities that we serve.

In Southern Oregon, access to healthcare is already hard. We live in a healthcare desert with very few providers, long travel distances, and limited specialty care. On top of that, stigma and fear already stop people from getting the care they need – especially when it comes to reproductive health and gender-affirming care.

I've watched community members hesitate to access services they are legally entitled to in Oregon because they are afraid. Afraid their information won't stay private. Afraid their name will be recorded. Afraid that seeking care could put them or their families at risk.

One of our community partners supports people with name changes and gender marker updates. Even before recent national threats, there was already fear around accessing these services. That fear is now worse. People are asking: Will my information be shared? Will this follow me? Will this be used against me later?

We see similar fear around reproductive health. Low-barrier services – like providing birth control without names, paperwork, or questions – exist because people are scared. When privacy feels uncertain, people don't show up. They delay care, avoid care, or go without it entirely.

That fear is already harming our communities.

HB 4088 helps close privacy gaps that are making people afraid to seek care that is legal in Oregon. It reassures patients that their private medical and identity information will not be shared with agencies or administrations that are openly hostile to reproductive and gender-affirming care.

This bill also matters deeply for providers. Rural areas like ours already have very few clinicians willing and able to offer this care. Without clear protections, providers worry about legal risk, harassment, or losing their practice altogether. If even one provider closes out of fear, entire communities lose access.

HB 4088 helps protect those providers so they can continue caring for their patients without fear of being forced to violate patient trust or professional ethics.

At its core, this bill is about safety, privacy, and dignity. It helps ensure that people don't have to choose between their health and their safety – and that providers don't have to choose between doing their job and protecting themselves.

From what I see every day in my community, these protections are urgently needed.

Thank you for taking the time to consider this testimony and for supporting the health and safety of all Oregonians.

Respectfully,
Jess Howell
Advocacy Coordinator
South Coast Health Equity Coalition