

Subject: Oregon Health Plan, Behavioral Health Budget HB 5525

To: Co-Chair Lee Beyer and Co-Chair Rob Noose and all the members of the Joint Subcommittee on Human Services

From: Central City Concern

Date: 3/14/2019

Central City Concern is a non-profit direct service organization that provides integrated primary and behavioral health care, supportive and affordable housing, and employment services to people impacted by homelessness in the Tri-County area. Central City Concern operates about 2,000 units of affordable housing, serves 9,000 patients annually through our 13 Federally Qualified Health Centers, makes 1,200 job placements annually and operates social services for the community justice programs in Multnomah and Clackamas counties. This year we are celebrating 40 years of service to our communities.

Behavioral Health is a broad discipline that includes both mental health and substance use disorder diagnoses and treatment. There are so many strong programs and professionals working hard to support communities across Oregon. These programs and professionals, some with their own lived experience, are serving people from crisis to stability regarding behavioral health needs. Here at Central City Concern we provide both in-patient and out-patient services, culturally specific services and recovery supportive housing.

We have heard from multiple local leaders across the state including local elected officials, the Governor, Legislators and department directors that substance use disorder and mental health response are a priority to be addressed. We are eager to see this call for prioritization turned to action.

Many of the people doing the incredible work across the state do so while facing increasingly more need with less resources to adequately pay staff for their hard work. This lack of resource also makes expansion of programs difficult. We know we do not have enough space for in-patient treatment and this has led to a higher acuity of need among people who are accessing out-patient community based services. At Central City Concern we pride ourselves on pushing for more integration of services between behavioral and physical health as well as other social services like housing and employment. Integration on this level takes deep expertise, dedication and strategy. The expertise and dedication of staff need to be better compensated to combat the high turnover in the behavioral health sector. Strategy requires resources to ensure our system of care is complete and doesn't cut people off or turn them away when they are seeking assistance, when they are ready, when we want to be part of their journey.

As you evaluate the Behavioral Health budget and potential investments consider how HB 2257 that declares substance use disorder a chronic illness will be actualized. This is a disease that deserves life-long support and we can create a system that really makes that possible. Consider HB 3095 to increase rates for behavioral health services to ensure we can pay our staff and they have a local avenue for student loan repayment programs to stabilize their ability to stay in these critical frontline positions. Consider HB 5512 that seeks to invest in Permanent

Contact: Mercedes Elizalde (Mercedes.Elizalde@ccconcern.org)

Supportive Housing for people experiencing homelessness with complex health needs that will include more community base services for behavioral health.

Consider the federal SUPPORT Patients and Communities Act, how can this be used to bolster what works in our system and make improvements for those areas that do not.

While we understand that the subcommittee's charge is to look at just the components that are assigned to the body, we know members want to seek understanding about how things like housing can improve outcomes for significantly more people when paired with appropriate levels of behavioral health services. These components work together in people's lives and can dramatically change their ability to be stable which will put less pressure on our social safety net. However, if these investments remain uneven, we will not see greater stability in our communities that is needed to see changes in high unitization of the most expensive social services and criminal justice interventions.

Thank you,

From all of us at Central City Concern

