

2/7/2020

Dear House Committee on Health Care,

We are writing this letter in support of HB 4161, a bill that will offer support for Regional Health Equity Coalitions (RHECs) to grow and develop their capacity to support statewide health equity efforts.

Regional Health Equity Coalitions (RHECs) are autonomous, community-driven, cross-sector groups. The RHEC model works by building on the **inherent strengths of local communities** to meaningfully involve them in identifying sustainable, long-term, policy, system and environmental solutions to increase health equity for communities of color, and those living at the intersection of race/ethnicity and other marginalized identities.

Community lead and driven solutions are important because they get to the actual cause of the health issue. It gives communities voice, power and ownership of their wellbeing. It allows them to be part of a conversation that will greatly impact them and how they access what they need to thrive.

The importance of codifying the definition of RHECs is central to this bill. The model of RHECs was designed intentionally to ensure that communities most impacted by health inequities were at the forefront of policy, systems and environment change work that impact their communities.

These communities include; Oregon's nine federally recognized Indian tribes, immigrants, refugees, migrant and seasonal farmworkers, low-income populations, persons with disabilities and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning communities in rural and urban areas, with communities of color as the leading priority.

Regional Health Equity Coalitions are completely independent of coordinated care organizations and government agencies and backbone organizations may be a federally recognized Indian Tribe in Oregon or a community based non-profit organization.

We support the model of RHECs that includes uplifting and centering the impact of structural, institutional, and interpersonal racism on the health and well-being of communities of color. The model also prioritizes meaningful engagement of communities most impacted to lead efforts; and honors community wisdom by ensuring policy and system change solutions build upon community strengths.

We support this bill because our mission is to empower African Americans and other communities of color in Oregon. The codifying of RHEC will be a huge step in ensuring that these communities are given voice when it comes to creating solutions that will positively impact their health outcomes.

With gratitude,

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