



Memorandum

To: Chair Gelser, Vice-Chair Anderson and Members of the Senate Committee on Human Services, Mental Health and Recovery

From: Danielle Sobel, Policy & Governmental Affairs Sr. Director, Oregon Primary Care Association
Marty Carty, Policy Senior Manager, Oregon Primary Care Association

Date: February 2, 2021

Re: Support for SB 555

On behalf of the Oregon Primary Care Association (OPCA), we respectfully request your support for SB 555.

OPCA is a non-profit organization, with a mission to support Oregon's 33 community health centers, also known as federally qualified health centers, in leading the transformation of primary care to achieve health equity for all. Community health centers deliver integrated medical, dental, and behavioral health services to **466,000—or one in 10—Oregonians**, many of whom otherwise would not be able to see a medical provider. Community health centers are providers within the CCO networks, providing care to some of Oregon's most vulnerable populations, including **one in four Oregon Health Plan members**.

In addition to providing high-quality integrated medical, dental and behavioral health care, health centers are committed to understanding the circumstances of their patients' lives and addressing those social determinants of health, such as food insecurity, housing, literacy, and job training. Food insecurity is one of the most commonly addressed social determinants of health addressed in a community health center, with innovative practices that include onsite farmers' markets, vouchers to community grocers, classes on healthy eating, and ensuring the family is connected to WIC and SNAP resources.

Health centers see firsthand how a lack of healthy fresh food and food insecurity can lead to **poor health outcomes** and **increased costs to the healthcare system**. Many families must choose between putting food on the table and other important expenses like rent and medical bills. Moreover, individuals suffering from food insecurity are less likely have access to healthy diets, be able to take medication as prescribed, and be able to maintain jobs and/or school attendance – all leading to downstream health complications.

We know that **many Oregonians rely on SNAP benefits to feed their families**. We must ensure that those receiving SNAP benefits have consistent and affordable access to a healthy food supply. Ensuring continued access to farmers markets and retail food outlets where the patient's SNAP benefits go further, benefits both Oregon's economy and expands on an already successful program that supports low-income Oregonians.

SB 555 is an upstream approach to improving health outcomes for patients and reducing health care costs for the state and our federal partners. We urge your support of this bill as an opportunity to be part of an upstream solution that both improves health and supports Oregon's agricultural economy.

Oregon Primary Care Association
Leading the transformation of care to achieve health equity for all
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