

We are writing this letter in support of SB 70 & HB 2760, two bills that will offer support for Regional Health Equity Coalitions (RHECs) to expand statewide and develop their capacity to support health equity efforts across Oregon. Specifically, this will standardize the Regional Health Equity Coalition model; expand this program to fully fund the existing six RHECs; add four new coalitions; and increase staffing to sufficiently support this important program.

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.

The work of the RHECs have had an impact that we are starting to see in our community because of the support of the Office of Equity & Inclusion and the funding we receive as a RHEC to work on the disparities our community faces. With the guidance of grassroots, community led and driven work we are able to work towards more equitable outcomes on their behalf. We give the power and lead back to the people because they are the ones most impacted while we provide the support and tools to build solutions that will be sustainable and most importantly developed through the lens of the people we serve.

The importance of codifying the definition of RHECs is central to this bill. The RHEC model 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 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.

The Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs is one of six RHECs in the State of Oregon and our work has laid the foundation for equity in our community as well as developed relationships that support our goals. We are able to work within our own models, create our own vision and goals to further health equity utilizing our own ways of being and knowing with the support of the RHECs and the funding. We use our voice and advocate strongly for our rights as a Tribe in ensuring tribal consultation and relationship building is at its core while doing this work. We are able to serve our communities in more expansive ways such as the census, providing PPE to the community, food boxes to elders and spaces to be in community in a time when we cannot physically be together. We are able to lean on the other five RHECs and all of our partners when needed and that is community building and resources sharing at its best. It is our collective efforts that not only allows us but that will continue to build and support our communities.

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 it has provided us with the foundation to continue our work in our community in a way that is feasible and representative of our ways of knowing and being. And at the same time has provided us opportunities to serve and be at a table that we may not have been invited to without the relationship and support from the other five RHECs. Lastly it has strengthened our efforts around ensuring tribal consultation and tribal relations is strong in all our efforts across this state.

Sincerely,

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Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs