



Virginia Garcia Memorial
HEALTH CENTER

PO Box 6149
Aloha, OR 97007

3305 NE Alolek Drive
Hillsboro, OR 97124

P: (503) 352.8610
E: info@vgmhc.org

VirginiaGarcia.org

TO: Chair Prusak, Vice-Chairs Hayden and Salinas, and Committee Members of the House Committee on Health Care

FR: Juan Franco, Policy and Advocacy Officer
Virginia Garcia Memorial Health Center

DT: April 1, 2021

RE: **Support for HB 3159: Data Justice Act**

Virginia Garcia Memorial Health Center proudly endorses **House Bill 3159**, the Data Justice Act.

At Virginia Garcia, we provide high quality and culturally appropriate health care to more than 52,000 people that live and work in Washington and Yamhill counties. For more than 45 years, our mission-driven employees have worked tirelessly to address and remove barriers many of our patients face when seeking health care. We translate our services into over 62 different languages, do not turn away anyone for inability to pay (25 percent of those we serve are uninsured, and 98 percent have low incomes).

Since the start of the pandemic, Virginia Garcia worked to redress the effects of racism in this public health crisis. Our patients experienced dramatically higher COVID-19 positivity rates - often trending 3-4 times higher than the Oregon average - to barriers in accessing the vaccine. The pandemic magnified the existing disparities for communities of color. Requiring the collection of patient information will allow health care organizations like Virginia Garcia to identify and highlight the factors that perpetuate racial and ethnic health disparities. This knowledge supports deliberate, targeted and equitable policies and programs to improve the health outcomes for BIPOC communities.

Virginia Garcia relies on data-informed strategies to remove barriers to care, providing high quality and culturally appropriate health care to the communities who need it most. We mobilized a COVID-19 response team that provides care relying on data to deliver health care and COVID-19 screening with our mobile clinic right where vulnerable communities live, work and worship. We use demographic data to inform our outreach efforts, ensuring our patients have access to the resources they need, including testing and COVID-19 prevention information. We continue to use this data to inform our vaccination efforts, identifying the barriers to access and helping to remove them.

As a community, it is our responsibility to raise our voices in a collective pursuit for racial, social and health justice. We must work together to shift the narrative in favor of truth, reconciliation and healing. In order to accomplish this goal, we must fully understand health disparities that currently exist and create new strategies that give communities of color access to the necessary resources and opportunities they require to obtain a life of health, wellness and quality.

Demonstrating our commitment to eliminating racial and ethnic health disparities, requires us to recognize that comprehensive data collection is a vital and foundational part of eliminating health disparities.

On behalf of Virginia Garcia, I urge you to support this bill and begin creating systems where all communities have the opportunity to thrive and pursue better health outcomes.