

Thank you for the opportunity to address the Ways and Means committee at this important time in the legislative process. I have been actively caring for patients as a Nurse Practitioner in Southern Oregon for the last nine years. Never in my 40 year career have I seen the day to day difficulties that my patients are facing now brought on by the combination crises of the Pandemic and the Alameda Fire. Before the Alameda fire many of my patients were severely impacted by the pandemic, struggling with chronic conditions, poverty and social risk from not having a house or living in high density housing with other family members or in a shelter. The anxiety created from this vulnerability increased substance abuse, and the need for medication to treat anxiety, insomnia and depression. The barriers to care led many to the emergency rooms to stabilize from acute symptoms brought on by chronic conditions not managed as well as they would be at other times. The Alameda fire added an additional crisis by creating trauma and displacing many from their community, family/friends and school options. There are many needs in our district right now. Some of the bills that are of particularly importance to meet the needs of the people I serve are HB 2417 funding for a mobile crisis unit to handle the many mental health crises that come up in the community outside of regular clinic hours, HB 2004 which would increase the numbers of low barrier shelters so folks can move from encampments which are a fire risk in the summer to a safer housing option. HB 2842 will also provide grants to make low-income housing healthier for folks who can't make these improvements on their own. HB 2316 will add additional housing options for individuals with mental health disorders. And Lastly SB 755 will help to expand recovery programs across the state and accomplish the work supported by voters in the November 2020 election who passed Measure 110, understanding that many Oregonians get stuck in a complicated, unhealthy predicament which often leads them into incarceration and unable to get the medical attention they need to recover from their addictions. The public health crisis of the pandemic and the environmental crisis of frequent fires has devastated our County and is taxing the social safety net we need to recover from these events. Please support housing, healthcare, mobile crisis intervention and recovery services as we fight to bring back a healthy, happy community in Southern Oregon. And lastly, allow the SB 770 Task Force to have more time to finish their work on bringing a publicly funded, comprehensive health program to all Oregon residents and support SB 428.