



LatinoNetwork

**Testimony of Anthony Castaneda, Policy Manager
Regarding HB 5024 Public Health Budget
Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Human Services
February 9, 2021**

Dear Co-Chair Lieber and Co-Chair Nosse,

As a local nonprofit dedicated to the health and well-being of Oregon's children and families, we thank you for the opportunity to share the experiences of our community and share our voice in **support of HB 5024 and the investment in the public health budget.**

Latino Network is a culturally-specific nonprofit serving Latino children, youth, and families in Multnomah, Clackamas, and Washington counties. Annually, our organization provides transformative services to over 8,000 Latino youth, families and community members in the areas of education, leadership development, and family stability.

The global pandemic revealed and exacerbated existing social, economic, and health disparities which disproportionately affects historically marginalized communities across Oregon. The impact is painfully felt by the Latino community. According to the latest Oregon Health Authority (OHA) data, while Latinos make up 13 percent of the state's population, Latinos account for nearly one in three COVID-19 cases. Months into the pandemic, leaders and decision makers moved quickly to implement *temporary* protections, such as the rent moratorium and eviction moratorium. Even with the temporary protections, we know that families are making the decision to work while sick because they do not want to fall behind on bills or incur rent debt out of fear of receiving an eviction notice. Lack of financial security is contributing to the spread of COVID-19 and hampering the state's efforts to curb the spread.

HB 5024 provides a path forward to rapidly fund the programs currently implemented by community-based organizations with support from the Oregon Health Authority and government partners. With vaccination of people of color lagging significantly, we need to keep the focus on providing wraparound services and adequately funding organizations to do this work. Our community loses trust in us everytime we communicate that we are unable to provide the bare minimum to keep the lights on.

HB5024 provides the resources to the Oregon Health Authority to fund community-based strategies, such as the Community Health Worker program, to provide critical wraparound



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services for people who need to isolate or quarantine due to COVID-19. This program began in mid-2020 and was successful in building partnerships between culturally-specific organizations and local public health authorities for community education and outreach, wraparound and contact tracing efforts. Ensuring people have the resources to stay at home during their infectious period is a critical strategy for curbing the spread of COVID-19.

With the end of the federal CARES Act, OHA's budget to continue providing isolation and quarantine (I&Q) funds to nonprofits has significantly diminished. Although CARES funds were extended till December 2021, most organizations pushed their funds out the door by the expected deadline of Dec 30, 2020 because of the community need for support. We currently are running a deficit in order to continue to provide services to clients. We are closed to new referrals until OHA can provide a sustainable funding source for community services.

We encourage the committee to move urgently and pass HB 5024 in order for community-based organizations to support their clients and fulfill new referrals.

Thank you for your leadership and time.