

Memorandum

To: Chair Sanchez, Vice-Chairs Nosse and Moore-Green and members of the House Committee on Behavioral Health

From: Marty Carty, Government Affairs Director, Oregon Primary Care Association

Date: March 1, 2021

Re: Support HB 2361

On behalf of the Oregon Primary Care Association (OPCA), I write to express our support for HB 2361.

OPCA is a non-profit organization, with a mission to support Oregon's 34 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 primary, dental, and behavioral health services to **466,000—or one in 10—Oregonians**, many of whom otherwise would not be able to see a health care 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**.

Oregon's community health centers are committed to creating a system in which people with co-occurring mental health and substance abuse problems as well as physical disorders find "no wrong door" when they seek help. Providers and care teams know first-hand that multiple points of entry into health care facilitates access for patients and enhances continuity of care. Yet, American behavioral health services are insufficient, and despite high demand, the root of the problem is lack of access – or the ability to find care. According to the National Council for Behavioral Health, 76% of Americans now see mental health as important as physical health.

Health centers have seen over triple the COVID-19 positivity rate (18.4%) as the state average (5.8%) and over four and a half times the rate for racial and ethnic minorities (26.8%), according to the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) and OHA data as of Dec. 17, 2020. We know health disparity is not isolated to COVID-19 and that it exists in every aspect of the health care delivery system, including behavioral health. OPCA and Oregon's health centers support programs that prioritize access to health care services in communities where a disproportionate percent of the population identifies as a racial or ethnic minority.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our support for HB 2361. The bill will have a positive impact on communities and outcomes. We believe that expanding access to health care for all Oregonians is one of the keys to transforming health care in Oregon.

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