



Testimony in Support of HB 2361
March 1, 2021
House Committee On Behavioral Health
Akil S. Patterson, MLS

Greetings Chair Sanchez, Vice-Chairs Nosse and Moore-Green, and members of the committee.

My name is Akil Patterson, and I am the political organizer for the Oregon Nurses Association (ONA). Today I submit, to you, testimony in support of HB 2361 on behalf of ONA's 15,000 registered nurses, Nurse Practitioners, and professional member affiliates throughout the state.

Our support of HB2361 is a direct reflection of our mission vision and values that focus on our collective power to advocate for nursing, quality healthcare, and healthy communities. We believe that if an organization is to be healthy, it starts with ensuring that the least of us are taken care of, just like the greatest of us. While this legislation focuses on the counties Morrow, Malheur, Hood River, and Umatilla, we believe that other counties with Large Hispanic Latinx, Latina, Latino, and those who identify within those populations should similarly be able to access services. HB 2361 is a significant first step in ensuring access to communities that speak a different language.

Nurses know that knowing the cost of healthcare is continuing to rise, and if we do not support those who are not yet sick, we will pay the price when they finally fall ill. Mental and behavioral health is part of a healthy community, and our members also serve in mental health facilities that are already underfunded and overcrowded. We need to invest in the training and education of people to manage behavioral health through proactive measures. This measure is one step towards doing so and increasing the number of people who can receive care.

ONA supports HB 2361, and we ask that you vote favorably to move the bill out of committee.