

House Committee on Health Care

Re: HB 4095 Establishment of a Dental Program to Provide Oral Health Care to Low-Income Veterans

Chair Prusak and Members of the House Health Care Committee ,

My name is Valdez Bravo. I am writing today as an individual in support of House Bill 4095.

I identify as a US Army Veteran (1995-2003, Operation Enduring Freedom); as a Latino; as the descendant of Standing Rock Sioux; as the father of a mixed-race household; as a senior healthcare administrator; as a Fellow in the American College of Healthcare Executives; as a former elected community college Board Trustee; and as a proud native Oregonian.

HB 4095 establishes a Veterans Dental Program within the Oregon Health Authority so as to provide oral health care to low income Veterans who reside in Oregon beginning in 2023.

For over 26 years, starting back in 1995 when I joined the Army, and now for over 16 years within the Department of Veterans Affairs, I have dedicated the majority of my career to deliver health care to my fellow Veterans. I strive to live up to the Baylor principles for high-quality care: safe, timely, equitable, effective, efficient, and patient-centered care.

I believe that health care equity includes delivering care regardless of an ability to pay.

Oral healthcare is essential to overall good health. Those who do not have access to oral healthcare are at a higher risk of developing serious oral conditions and diseases. Untreated oral health care issues can lead to a myriad of other diseases including life threatening diseases. Many Oregonians, especially low-income Oregonians struggle to afford oral healthcare services. This includes Veterans.

Currently the VA only treats Veterans who have a 100% Service Connection or who are service connected for dental issues with few exceptions. This means that the vast majority of America's Veterans are unable to receive oral health care as part of their VA benefits.

This bill will allow low-income Veterans in Oregon, regardless of their VA Service Connection, to get the oral healthcare they need without having to worry about the cost of the visit. This bill will give America's heroes, who have served and sacrificed for our state and nation, the opportunity to receive the care they need before their oral health problems become worse. And that is why I believe that the House Committee on Health Care should support HB 4095.

Thank you to Chair Prusak and the Members of the House Committee on Health Care for your strong support of HB 4095, and for providing the much needed oral health care our Veterans deserve.

Valdez G. Bravo, FACHE
Lake Oswego, Oregon
Feb 2nd, 2022