



A driving force for health equity

Submitted via electronic mail

February 3, 2022

The Honorable Kathleen Taylor
Oregon State Senate
900 Court St. NE, S-423
Salem, Oregon 97301

Re: Support for SB 1545, Establishes Grant Programs to Provide Funding for Workforce Development Activities that Aim to Increase Access for Priority Populations to Training Opportunities in Health Care

Dear Chair Taylor,

On behalf of OCHIN, I appreciate the opportunity to offer support for SB 1545, which prioritizes workforce development and funding for underserved communities. Oregon is facing growing critical workforce shortages in community health centers, public health departments, and critical access hospitals. OCHIN applauds your leadership and is proud to support efforts to alleviate this growing crisis.

OCHIN is an Oregon based [national health research network](#) and continuous learning health system locally-controlled provider collaborative that offers technology solutions, informatics, evidence-based research, and policy insights. OCHIN network members in Oregon provide care to more than 580,000 patients and had more than 2.3 million visits in 2021. For over two decades, OCHIN has advanced equitable health care solutions by leveraging the strength of our network's unique data set and the practical experience of our members to drive technology innovation at scale for patients and providers in underserved communities.

The impact of COVID-19, including the current Omicron surge, has devastated the workforce among health centers that face unprecedented rates of turnover and burnout. Community clinics are struggling to maintain capacity and cannot scale to meet growing demand - an alarming trend, since health centers play a critical role in reducing burden on local emergency departments, particularly in rural and underserved communities. Community clinics are hardest hit by vacancies among [support and operational staff who shoulder clinics' administrative duties](#) (including front desk, credentialing, and billing) so providers can focus on delivering patient care. The need for technically trained support and operational staff will only grow with the adoption and implementation of modernized health information technology, which is urgently needed to transform clinical care delivery and improve public health capabilities at scale. In order to accomplish the goal of providing care to those who need it most in Oregon, we need to prioritize the development of a 21st century workforce that can operationalize continually evolving health technology.

COVID-19 has caused the most harm to groups facing structural inequality and have been negatively impacted by the persistent lack of career opportunities. This bill works to solve this systemic problem, something which OCHIN strongly supports. Please contact me at stollj@ochin.org to discuss how we can help to develop an equitable 21st Century workforce.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jennifer Stoll".

Jennifer Stoll

Executive Vice President
External Affairs