



Written testimony for SB 564, 2023

Chair Patterson and Vice-Chair Hayden,

For the record, my name is Amy Fellows and I am writing this letter in support of SB 564, a bill that will offer support for Regional Health Equity Coalitions (RHECs) to enter into the second phase of expansion which began in 2021 through SB 70. This expansion is working toward statewide representation to develop RHEC capacity to support health equity efforts across Oregon. Specifically, this will expand this program to fully fund the existing ten RHECs; add five new coalitions aimed at achieving statewide coverage; and increase staffing to sufficiently support this important program.

Regional Health Equity Coalitions (RHECs) are autonomous, community-driven, cross-sector groups. The RHEC model works by building on the inherent strengths of local communities to meaningfully involve them in identifying sustainable, long-term, policy, system and environmental solutions to increase health equity for communities of color, and those living at the intersection of race/ethnicity and other marginalized identities.

Community led and driven solutions are important because we need to make policy based on the lived experiences of communities that have not historically been heard.

The RHEC model was designed intentionally to ensure that communities most impacted by health inequities were at the forefront of policy, systems and environment change work that impact their communities. These communities include; Oregon's nine federally recognized Tribes, immigrants, refugees, migrant and seasonal farmworkers, low-income populations, persons with disabilities and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning communities in rural and urban areas, with communities of color as the leading priority.

I live in Eugene and am involved in the new Lane and Douglas County Regional Health Equity Coalition where we are building on years of work done by the Lane Equity Coalition and other community advocates in Douglas and Lane Counties. We Can Do

Better has also been a member of Oregon Health Equity Alliance for many years and our Allies for a Healthier Oregon Coordinator participate on their Policy Committee.

We support the model of RHECs that includes uplifting and centering the impact of structural, institutional, and interpersonal racism on the health and well-being of communities of color. The model also prioritizes meaningful engagement of communities most impacted to lead efforts; and honors community wisdom by ensuring policy and system change solutions build upon community strengths.

We support this bill because every county in Oregon should have a Regional Health Equity Coalition supporting their communities.

Sincerely,

Amy Fellows, MPH
Executive Director
We Can Do Better