



January 31, 2023

Dear Senator Patterson and the Senate Committee on Health Care,

Community Outreach Inc. (COI) is located in Benton County Oregon. We serve clients and patients in Linn, Benton, and Lincoln Counties. We provide a breadth of services to help families and individuals who are experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness strengthen and rebuild their lives. They gain the skills and resources they need to remain permanently stable. Some of those resources include medical care, behavioral healthcare, case management, transformational housing, childcare, and food pantries. Our mission is to help people help themselves lead healthy and productive lives.

As COI's Interim Executive Director and the Administrative Director of Behavioral Health, I'm writing to urge you to support SB 564. This bill would expand funding for Regional Health Equity Coalitions and provide funding for an additional 5 RHECs across the state. COI is a member of the Linn Benton Health Equity Alliance. This bill is necessary to enable/build capacity for the state's Regional Health Equity Programs so that they continue being effective in addressing health inequities resulting from structural racism and discrimination and can move closer to statewide coverage.

The Linn Benton Health Equity Alliance has helped COI access racial, cultural, and gender equity trainings. This training has allowed us to develop a team of client leaders and work closely with them to help shape the strategic direction of our organization. Our client leaders identified gaps in our services such as mental health counseling in Spanish and counselors with expertise in racial trauma. As a result of their advocacy, COI created my position as the Behavioral Health Administrator with the goal of expanding our behavioral health program with a focus on equity, diversity, and inclusion. The training also allowed other COI program directors to identify policies that create barriers for racial, cultural, and gender inclusion in our housing dorms and childcare center. Since then, we have begun to create plans to work with our state and federal partners to address these policy barriers.

COI's services are holistic in nature and are designed to have a long term positive affect on our clients and prevent downstream issues such as chronic homelessness, hunger, and chronic diseases. The LBHEA is a critical partner to help COI achieve our mission objectives. Please consider the requests of the RHECs to support SB 564.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stephan O'Hair".

Stephan O'Hair
Interim Executive Director