

Submitter: Sandi Cleveland Phibbs
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Health Care
Measure: SB564

As a public health researcher and practitioner in Oregon, I am writing to voice my strong support for SB 564.

First, Oregon needs more champions, activists and advocates for health equity. Because of my professional role, I know that not only it is next to impossible to get language interpretation for healthcare services, I know that providers and health systems are often opposed to making the needed adjustment to improve healthcare access and quality. This is just one example of persistent, pervasive structural racism, that continues to harm our communities and the people who live in them.

Second, the change we need must happen locally - where people are born, live, learn, work and play. SB 564 is needed to fund Regional Health Equity Coalitions and provide funding for an additional 5 RHECs across the state. Structural change happens when individuals build relationships, use their voices, and come together, and that cannot be accomplished solely through statewide initiatives.

Third, it is past time for Oregon to invest in health equity at the local level. RHEC funding has not increased since 2014. I know the the Linn Benton Health Equity Alliance has been actively educating community members, health partners, and leaders since I moved here in 2010. Our local RHEC advocates for needed legislation, serves on local committees to bring injustices and discrimination to the forefront, and more. I know the dedicated, passionate individuals who do this work personally and we need more of them.

Thank you for voting yes on this bill.
Sincerely,
Sandi Cleveland Phibbs, PhD, MPH