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On Behalf Of: Linn-Benton Health Equity Alliance
Committee: Senate Committee On Health Care
Measure: SB564

SB 564, 2023

Chair Patterson and Vice-Chair Hayden,

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.

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 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.