



Oregon AFSCME Support for SB 624

February 20, 2023

Dear Chair Patterson, Vice-Chair Hayden and Members of the Senate Health Care Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of SB 624 on the Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics Program.

Oregon AFSCME Council 75 represents over 33,000 workers in every corner of Oregon, including a growing number of members in Oregon's behavioral health nonprofit agencies. As employees of Cascadia Health, our members were part of the pilot program for the Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic Program (CCBHC). While the impacts were incremental, they reported the positive difference the CCBHC approach made in supporting their work and meeting the needs of the people they care for.

As we all know, the behavioral health workforce has been experiencing high levels of burnout and turnover which started long before the pandemic.* One of the biggest contributing factors to burnout is an inability to see the positive outcomes of your work. For too long, many community-based and public behavioral health settings have struggled to meet the needs of the people in their care. They are simply responding to the highest needs of the mental health or substance use crises in a system that has been cobbled together using a patchwork of funding sources that only pay for specific parts of the work. Because our members in community care were unable to provide their patients with a level of care needed early in an illness our members working in hospital emergency departments have dealt with a growing crisis of people coming in with acute physical and mental health illnesses that should have been treated earlier.

The Certified Community Based Health Clinics have helped address multiple issues, particularly in providing better care and outcomes for patients. This happens because the funding supports the full need - from care to data, and of course, the people doing all of that work. Because the funding is not tied to overly specific pieces of the work, clinics are able to use it to provide a more holistic approach to care, and are able to get the things they need to provide that care. The CCBHC program has provided more stable funding which helps keep the workforce stable to truly provide quality care and treatment and to see positive outcomes for the patients. The positive outcomes and knowing the differences being made reduces the burnout.

Providing all communities in Oregon with the opportunity to have Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics will lead to increased positive patient outcomes and decreased turnover and burnout in the workforce. Please pass SB 624.

* Reports ranging from the [United We Heal Report](#) published in the Spring of 2017, through the [2020 Audit by the Secretary of State](#) and a couple between those two reports all highlight burnout coupled with low pay as contributing factors of the high turnover in the workforce. This [link is to a Google Sheet linking to 4 reports](#) on Oregon's Behavioral Health System and giving a quick look at the issues highlighted in each.

Thank you for your work.

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