

Submitter: Jenny Abeling

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Behavioral Health and Health Care

Measure: HB2002

HB 2002 Testimony

Good afternoon, Chair (LAST NAME) and committee members, my name is Jenny Abeling and I am the Director of the Essential Worker Healthcare Trust. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak with you today. On behalf of , the nurses, med techs, laundry and dietary aides, and many other essential long-term care staff we support I am proud to testify in support of House Bill 2002.

The Essential Worker Healthcare Trust provides high-quality benefits for low-income essential workers and their families. Long-term care workers are essential to building a thriving healthcare system in Oregon— yet many long-term care workers have struggled to access the health services they deserve due to increasing financial barriers and poor coverage options. Over 80 percent of the workforce are women, many of whom need to provide healthcare to their families. This program, with the support of SEIU 503 and long-term care employers, has given access to quality healthcare services that are now affordable to our members and their families throughout Oregon.

Even with these rich benefits, we know there continues to be inequitable access to reproductive and gender-affirming care services in our communities. We support expanding access to care and closing the gaps in healthcare services for the workers we support.. We need to protect our providers and health centers who provide care to all patients who seek gender affirming care and reproductive healthcare in Oregon. Part of the solution must be addressing areas in the state where there is little to no access to healthcare providers,causing patients to travel far distances to access care, and spend money they cannot afford.

Innovative healthcare solutions that address care and access gaps, including regions that are so-called “healthcare deserts,” is the person-centered solution that is needed to address this issue. By piloting a mobile healthcare clinic, we can address areas of the state where providers and services are lacking. We can bridge the gap by creating solutions that meet the needs of the community and its members seeking these services. This addresses people where they are at, in their own community, preventing delays in care that might snow ball into a crisis if not addressed quickly. Especially in our more rural communities, the workers we support experience lack adequate access to reproductive and gender affirming services. If services and providers are available, they wait weeks or months to get appointments. Eastern Oregonians are estimated to experience a 35% decrease in access to sexual and reproductive healthcare as a result of Idaho’s abortion ban. The essential workers we support are being required to drive further and further distances to access care, all while trying to continue to work and meet the needs of the state’s most vulnerable

populations in our long-term care facilities.

HB 2002 addresses the needs of all Oregonians who are seeking the full spectrum reproductive health and gender-affirming care services for themselves and their families. The Essential Worker Healthcare Trust, in partnership with SEIU 503, supports HB 2002 to help all Oregonians receive the care and services they need.