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Senate Committee on Health Care
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Chair Patterson, Vice Chair Hayden and members of the committee,

Please accept this testimony in support of SB 1074. As the Executive Director of Marion & Polk Early Learning Hub, I can attest to the importance of investing in a billing pathway for Community Health Workers who work in underserved communities. Their work has a far-reaching impact on the Social Determinants of Health.

Having trained community health worker staff is allowing us to provide better services, and build programs that are built with a trauma informed lens and that our policies reflect the work that will support the ecosystem of safety. We work closely with Catholic Community Services' Fostering Hope Initiative (FHI) program and many other organizations supporting families through community based health worker (CHW) services. FHI and its partners have demonstrated the transformative nature of having a strong CHW presence in the community, but we struggle to stabilize services for families in need because there is no State billing pathway for CHW services that are not tied to a diagnosis. The need for CHW services in our communities, outside of clinical settings, is great, especially within traditionally underserved communities.

As the early learning hub, we offer resource navigation services and have three trained community health workers on staff. While we do not currently receive funding for or bill for this service, we are actively engaged in the work as a community. We are able to assist families enrolled in Preschool Promise find additional resources to meet their needs which includes connection to behavioral health services, assisting in resolving issues with attendance in preschool, access to food, and many other basic needs. We also have a program, Safe @ Home working with families as they are being reunited with their children placed in foster care/child welfare involvement. This work involves accessing many different supportive services to ensure that children are being reunited into a safe environment. The possibility of engaging in this work as SB1074 lays out.

I urge you to support SB 1074 to improve the Social Determinants of Health and Equity for all Oregonians.

Thank you for your service to our community and for supporting SB 1074.

Sincerely,

Lisa Harnisch
Executive Director