

Submitter: Benji Fargason

On Behalf Of: La Clinica Acute Care Clinic

Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On Capital Construction

Measure: HB5030

Dear Ways and Means Committee,

I am writing in support of La Clinica's Acute Care Clinic project to expand urgent care services in Jackson County. Our community has lost a significant amount of our urgent care capacity which has forced residents to use crowded, and expensive, emergency room services for issues that could be easily handled in a clinic setting. La Clinica's target population is 77,113 residents, many of which were deemed essential workers during the pandemic yet earn lower incomes. This represents 35% of our community who cannot afford the high cost of emergency room care for non-emergency reasons.

I personally know an individual who has been through a tremendous amount of hardship over the past two years after being involved in a car accident. Pain management turned into prescription drug dependency, then addiction. Addiction soon progressed to illegal drugs resulting in the loss of his marriage, his job, disassociation from his child, and ultimately homelessness. After moving to southern Oregon, he entered rehab and was referred to La Clinica to establish medical care that would coordinate with his achieving sobriety. Now two years sober, he attributes La Clinica to saving his life during his time of greatest need.

Having easily accessible healthcare for others like this is essential to achieving greater stability throughout a community.

In all, this project will benefit our community in the following ways:

1. Help prepare Jackson County to respond to future COVID outbreaks, as well as other infectious diseases.
2. Provide an affordable alternative to emergency department visits to reduce overall costs and prevent large medical care debt.
3. Provide more same-day, walk-in appointments for working folks who can't always plan their appointments and put off needed care.
4. Provide x-ray and ultrasound diagnostic services at an affordable price.
5. Provide prescription drugs at an affordable price.
6. Serve the residents of nearby emergency housing shelters at the City of Medford Navigation site and Urban Campground.
7. Provide an entry point for La Clinica's behavioral health, dental health, and wellness services to community members who are uninsured for these services.

To improve our health system, La Clinica will remodel an existing 2,728 square-foot building that currently serves as their temporary Acute Care Clinic to add a processing lab and a retail pharmacy with drive-up capabilities. Both services will reduce the cost of care and improve health outcomes.

- According to the AARP Public Policy Institute, the average annual retail cost of drug therapy for prescription drugs in 2017 was almost \$20,000 per year. Low-income families and those on a fixed income must frequently choose between their health and affording other basic needs.

This project will also enable La Clinica to build a new 7,038 square-foot Acute Care Clinic to house twelve exam rooms, x-ray, and ultrasound services. This clinic will serve as La Clinica emergency response site.

- To limit airborne infections, two exam rooms will have designated HVAC systems and heavy-duty exhaust fans.
- The site will include solar and generator capabilities to operate during power outages.

I strongly encourage funding this improvement to our health system. This is a great opportunity to improve the health of our community and reduce the cost of health care for everyone.

If you have any questions, please contact me at 541-494-4761.

Sincerely,

Benji Fargason