

May 3, 2023

Dear Co-Chairs Sanchez and Steiner, Co-Vice Chairs, and members of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means,

On behalf of the Latino Community Association (LCA), an organization that has been serving Latino and immigrant families in Central Oregon since 2000, and all of the signatory community partners named below, we are asking for your support to ensure the approval of sufficient funding to expand coverage of the Healthier Oregon Program to all eligible residents in the upcoming Oregon Health Authority (OHA) budget request for Oregon's 2023-2025 biennium budget.

With House Bill (*HB*) 3352 put into law, thousands of Oregon residents who were previously excluded from the Oregon Health Plan (OHP), now qualify to receive preventive health services through the Healthier Oregon Program (HOP) regardless of immigration status. While we are thankful for this milestone and recognize the work it took to accomplish this advancement of no longer using immigration status as a disqualifier for OHP coverage, a significant number of Oregon residents are still excluded from receiving this life-affirming benefit.

The Healthier Oregon Program is meant to include all qualifying individuals regardless of immigration status. However, OHP set an enrollment limit that currently only qualifies people ages **19-25** and **55 and older**. It deliberately excludes people ages **26-54** who are in their **prime working years** from accessing affordable healthcare through OHP. Most of the workers who do not qualify for OHP due to their immigration status are not offered health insurance through their employer or qualify for the health insurance marketplace; and even for those who do, these options often come at a cost that can be a barrier. This puts an already marginalized group of people at a disadvantage when it comes to accessing healthcare.

As I'm sure you are aware, previous to *HB* 3352, Oregon residents with no legal immigration status only qualified for emergency health aid known as ***Citizen Alien Waived Emergent Medical (CAWEM)***. This allowed patients with life-threatening medical emergencies to see an ER doctor, but would not cover costs for continued treatment with specialists when patients are referred to them by doctors. HOP now addresses this issue, but only for people who fall into the qualifying age groups. It is estimated that approximately **55,000 Oregon residents remain excluded** and only qualify for limited *CAWEM* coverage. With a lack of full healthcare coverage, patients who forgo needed treatment can develop serious and even life-threatening conditions.

Due to this lack of obtainable coverage, community-based organizations in Central Oregon such as Volunteers in Medicine and Mosaic Community Health have been crucial in filling the healthcare gaps. Our research shows Latinos who do not qualify for state or federal insurance programs turn to these non-profit clinics for their preventive health care needs. Within the tri-county region, Mosaic Community Health sees patients on a sliding-scale fee basis. Latinos currently make up nearly 20 percent of Mosaic Community Health's 27,000+ patients across all three of Central Oregon's counties.

In the city of Bend, a non-profit clinic operated by Volunteers in Medicine (VIM) provides mostly free care to uninsured adults who live throughout Central Oregon. 99 percent of VIM's 700+ patients are Latino immigrants. To access VIM's services, patients in Crook and Jefferson counties must drive to Bend. This limited access to care comes at a significant cost in transportation and time, including lost wages for some who take time off for travel. Undocumented family members already face so many barriers when it comes to accessing basic services within the state; healthcare should not be one of them.

We ask for you to acknowledge the challenges immigrant families face in achieving equity in healthcare. They deserve full OHP benefits—medical care, dental care, mental health care, prescriptions, and more - because they have earned it; because they pay taxes yet receive little in return compared to their non-immigrant neighbors. Access to quality affordable healthcare is crucial in order for Oregon to support healthy communities.

By voting in favor of *HB 3352*, our representatives made it clear that it is a priority for Oregon to ensure that **ALL** eligible individuals receive full OHP benefits. **Now it is necessary to fully fund the Healthier Oregon Program.** We stand ready to work with you to address this critical issue and help ensure that HOP is effectively implemented in our communities. Please reach out to us if you would like to have a dialogue to discuss this further.

Sincerely,

[Signatories are on the following page]

Zavier Borja and LeeAnn O'Neill  
Board of Directors - President and Vice President  
Latino Community Association of Central Oregon



Kat Mastrangelo  
Executive Director  
Volunteers in Medicine Clinic of the Cascades



Megan Haase  
FNP, CEO  
Mosaic Community Health



Carmen Madrid  
Executive Director  
Central Oregon Health Council



Megan Perkins, Katherina Barguil, James Evans,  
and Renee Ruiz  
Board of Directors - Embrace Bend



<p>Hayley Nunn VP of Patient Services Planned Parenthood Columbia Willamette</p>	 <p>Planned Parenthood Care. No matter what.</p> <hr/> <p>Planned Parenthood Columbia Willamette</p>
<p>Ed Fitch City Mayor Redmond, Oregon</p>	 <p>city of <b>REDMOND</b> oregon</p>
<p>Melanie Kebler City Mayor Bend, Oregon</p>	 <p><b>BEND</b></p> <p>CITY OF BEND</p>
<p>Phil Chang County Commissioner Deschutes County</p>	<p>[We can't use the County logo, but can use his name!]</p>
<p>Melina Moran Chair Oregon Commission on Hispanic Affairs (OCHA)</p>	 <p>OACO Oregon Advocacy Commissions Office</p>
<p>Sarah Mahnke, MSW Executive Director Thrive Central Oregon</p>	 <p>thrive central oregon</p>
<p>Jamie Bowman Co-Founder Central Oregon Trans Health Coalition</p>	 <p><b>CENTRAL OREGON</b> <b>TRANS</b> <b>HEALTH</b> <b>COALITION</b></p>

Becky Groves  
Board of Directors - President  
PFLAG Prineville



Jamie Bowman  
Executive Director  
Prideville (Prineville)



Dalton Miller-Jones  
Portland State University



Beth Hoover  
Co-Chair  
Restorative Justice & Equity

