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LatinoNetwork

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To: Chair Nosse, Vice-Chairs and all the members of the committee on behavioral health and health care

Re: Support HB 4151

Date: 2/5/2024

Latino Network was founded in 1996 by advocates for the needs of the growing Latinx community in Multnomah County. Since then, these grassroots beginnings have evolved into a continuum of services that support Latinx individuals, families, and communities. Our programs currently focus on education, advocacy & leadership, health & wellness, economic justice, youth empowerment & violence prevention, and arts & culture, engaging nearly 11,000 community members throughout Multnomah, Clackamas, and Washington Counties in the last year. We are the leading culturally-specific provider for Latinx youth, parent, and family services in the Portland area with the goal of serving the nearly 19% of Oregon's population who identify as Latinx or Hispanic. Latino Network currently provides direct services to youth and families in Senate Districts 13-15 and 19-25 and House Districts 25, 26, 28, 29, 37, 40 and 42-50.

We support HB 4151 because we see every day the challenges in navigating an extremely resource strapped system for youth behavioral health. Latino Network employs teams of Community Health Workers (CHW) and Community Education Workers (CEW) who conduct risk assessment in alignment with school-based partnerships, home visits through public health funded services and youth and parent services during school and after school. According to Mental Health America's Youth Ranking 2023, Oregon ranks last out of all states, with Oregon youth having higher rates of mental health problems and lower rates of access to behavioral health care than any other state.

Latino Network knows these challenges are highly impacted by the availability of an educated, well trained bilingual and bicultural workforce. We are part of several workforce development initiatives and are the state approved trainer for the CHWs certification program. We are working with Multnomah County to launch a new pilot program this year to place masters in social work students in our school-based programs. This will explicitly help people early in their professional journey to understand how to work with youth and their families in an educational setting. The view from the doctors office is simply not enough to adequately respond to the behavioral health needs of youth and their family.

This bill provides an opportunity through the establishment of a Child Behavioral Health Task Force to further explore these pilot programs, training and certification structures and the range of professions engaged with children and youth to be better connected systems and ease barriers to employment.

Please support HB 4151