

Introduction

My name is Sabrina Ballew. I am currently the Chairperson of the Oregon Mobile Integrated Healthcare Coalition and the manager for Mercy Flights Mobile Integrated Healthcare Program in Southern Oregon.

I am here to speak on the critical role of Mobile Integrated Healthcare and Community Paramedic programs in our communities, how this bill will support and address some of the gaps and barriers they face, and how Senate Bill 161 can help transform the healthcare landscape in Oregon, providing equitable access to care to all Oregonians.

The Role and Impact of MIH/CP Programs

MIH and CP programs are designed to meet patients where they are—bringing care directly to homes and communities. These programs focus on preventive care, chronic disease management, and addressing health concerns early to avoid unnecessary 911 calls and emergency department visits. For example, a community paramedic visiting a patient with unmanaged diabetes can intervene, connect them to resources, and prevent a medical crisis. This proactive approach improves outcomes and reduces costs, ensuring a healthier Oregon.

Needs, Gaps, and Barriers

Despite the proven success, MIH and CP programs face significant challenges. Workforce development, retention, and education are among the most pressing issues. To meet the growing demand, we must recruit and train more community paramedics, EMTs, and community health workers. Additionally, retaining these skilled professionals requires ongoing education and pathways for career advancement. The gaps in workforce capacity directly limit our ability to expand these services, particularly in underserved and rural communities.

How Bill Funding Will Help

The funding provided by this bill will strengthen our workforce in several areas. It will support training programs to equip healthcare professionals with the specialized skills required for MIH and CP roles. Most importantly, it will create continuing education and professional development opportunities, ensuring retention and long-term success for both the professionals and the communities they serve. By investing in the people who deliver care, we are building a stronger foundation for the future of healthcare in Oregon."

ORMIHC's Capacity to Deliver

The Oregon Mobile Integrated Healthcare Coalition (ORMIHC) is uniquely positioned to operationalize the goals of this bill. Dedicated to advancing Mobile Integrated Healthcare (MIH) initiatives across the state, ORMIHC brings together healthcare providers, emergency services, and community stakeholders to improve access to quality care, reduce healthcare costs, and enhance patient outcomes. In 2024, ORMIHC expanded Oregon's workforce by adding 12 certified community paramedics. Our expertise ensures that every dollar is spent effectively. We unite a coalition of EMTs, paramedics, community health workers, and administrators who understand Oregon's healthcare challenges and opportunities, driving meaningful impact statewide.

Closing

This bill is not just about funding—it's about investing in a healthier, more resilient Oregon. By supporting MIH and CP programs, we build a healthcare system that prioritizes prevention, equity, and community well-being. I urge you to vote in favor of this bill and join us in creating a stronger, healthier future for all Oregonians. Thank you.

