



February 19, 2025

Re: Pop 411 Presentation and Legislator Questions Regarding RHECs

Co-Chairs Valderrama and Campos, and members of the committee,

I appreciate the opportunity to provide insight into the Regional Health Equity Coalition (RHEC) program and its funding. As one of Oregon's longest-serving RHECs, the **Southern Oregon Health Equity Coalition (SO Health-E)** has firsthand experience with its impact and collaborative structure.

### **Background & Process**

SO Health-E began as a community-led coalition addressing disparities in Southern Oregon Latina teen pregnancy rates. When the early RHEC program RFGPs went out in we applied through a competitive grant process, leveraging local partnerships and expertise and were awarded in 2014.

The **POP 411 funding** would follow this same process to establish three new RHECs in currently unserved areas. The **request for grant proposals (RFP)** ensures eligibility criteria, capacity-building funding, and technical assistance to community-based organizations already engaged in community health efforts. This **community-driven model** ensures local solutions rather than a top-down state approach.

**We have seen this type of legislatively driven expansion work in 2021 with Senate Bill 70, which started a phased expansion that POP 411 continues.** When the legislature expanded the RHEC program in 2021, SO Health-E staff sat on the review committee to advise OHA on the new RHEC applicants based on real-world experience running a RHEC. As a result of that expansion, we now have new colleagues serving community needs in Coos, Curry, Marion, Yamhill, Polk, Lincoln, Lane, Douglas, Morrow and Union Counties.

**I've included two visuals on the following page, one of the current RHEC regions (in color) and the counties that would be eligible to apply to become a RHEC region. As you will see, the eligible counties are areas of high unmet health need that would benefit** from these investments.

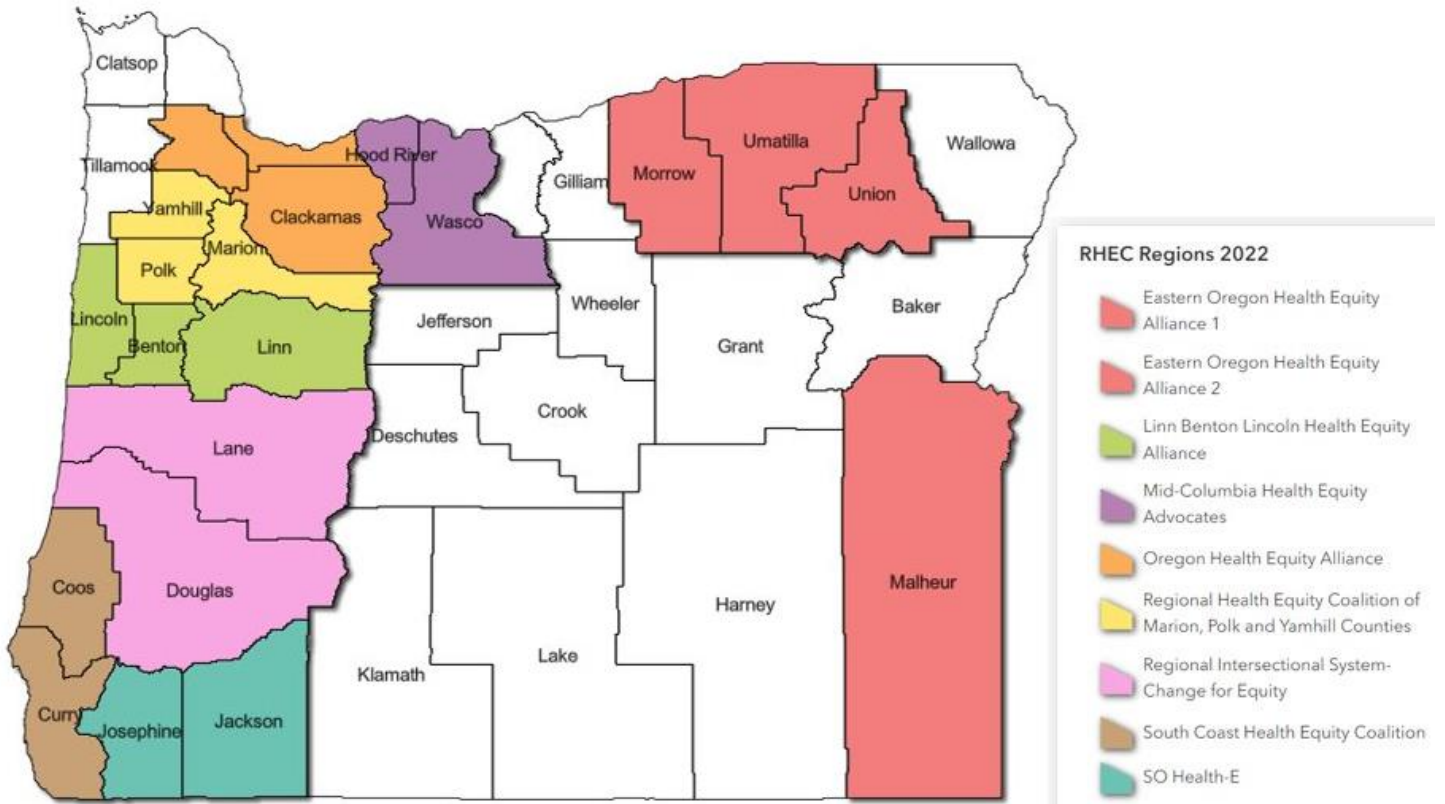


Figure 1 Current RHEC Regions (Highlighted in Color) | Source: Oregon Health Authority

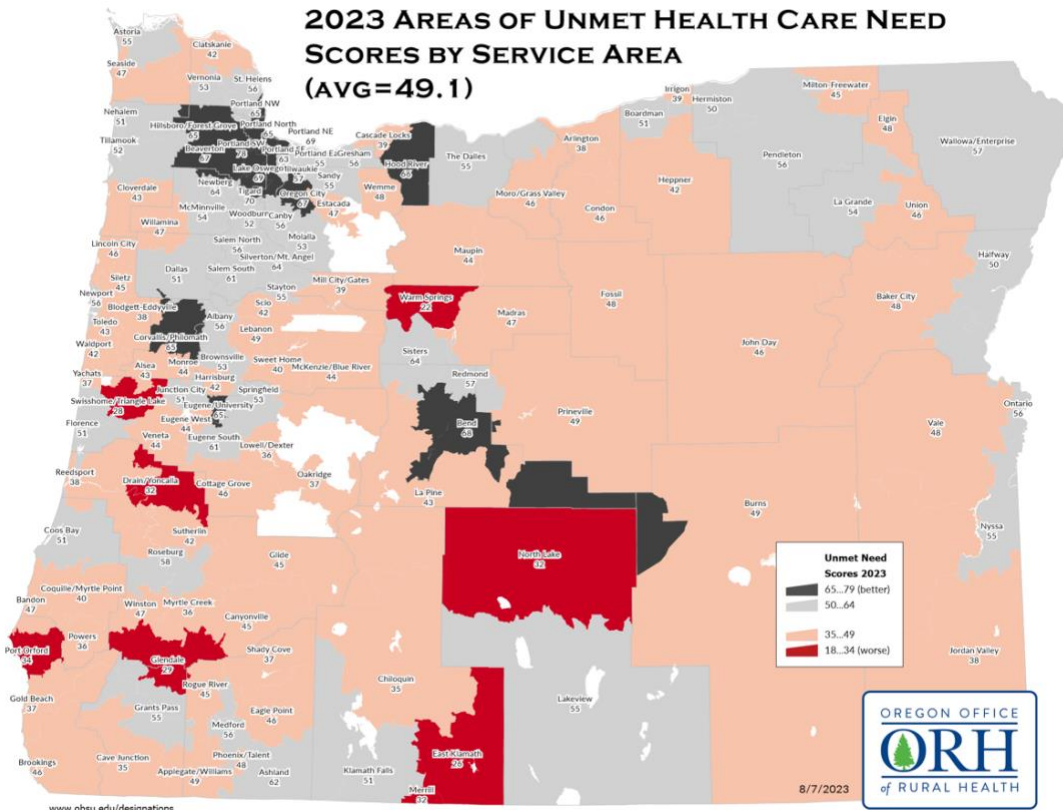


Figure 2 Areas of Unmet Health Care Need 2023 | Source: Oregon Office of Rural Health

## Accountability & Public Health Collaboration

- **Funding & Public Health:** While RHEC funding supports community-based organizations (CBOs), we work **closely with public health departments**. Public health staff participate in our cross-sector groups, and we add capacity through participating in public health initiatives.
- **Oversight & Transparency:** RHECs submit **regular narrative and expenditure reports** to OHA, as well as **community engagement and needs assessments** to track impact.
- **Goals & Planning:** RHECs must submit a **detailed plan outlining community needs and strategies** before receiving funds every biennium.

## Impact & Expansion

- A prime example of our collaboration with public health is the **2023 Jackson and Josephine County Community Health Assessment (CHA) and Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP)**. Our role in the CHA and CHIP included serving as steering committee members, chairing the equity subcommittee, helping to plan and distribute CHA surveys in English and Spanish, and recruiting and co-hosting focus groups with historically underrepresented community members.
- By engaging historically underrepresented groups, we **increased CHA participation by 49% from 2018**, demonstrating the power of community-driven health equity efforts.
- Another example of SO Health-E's impact is our fire relief work after the Almeda and Obenchain fires of 2020. We raised funds and **directly supported 66 families who lost their homes to get back into stable housing in their communities** through paying for either first month's rent and deposit or in some cases down payment assistance.

I hope this is helpful in response to your questions. We are also **happy to meet** with any legislators who have additional questions or would like to talk further.

Respectfully submitted,

*Michelle Glass*

Michelle Glass, On behalf of the Southern Oregon Health Equity Coalition

