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To: Chair Patterson, Vice-Chair Hayden, and members of the Senate Committee on Health Care
From: Bridget Budbill, Legislative Advocate at the Oregon Law Center
Re: Senate Bills 528 and 530 – Supporting Regional Health Equity Coalitions
Date: February 27, 2025

Dear Chair Patterson, Vice-Chair Hayden, and members of the Senate Committee on Health Care,

The Oregon Law Center (OLC) is a legal aid organization providing free, civil legal services to low-income Oregonians. Nearly all of our clients receive their health care through the Oregon Health Plan (OHP), Oregon's Medicaid program. We ask that you support Senate Bills (SB) [528](#) and [530](#), which resource and expand Regional Health Equity Coalitions (RHECs). RHECs are beacons within Oregon's healthcare landscape because they provide a unique, independent forum to have community-led conversations about healthcare gaps amongst people who feel these gaps most acutely.

SB 528 funds three new RHECs in parts of the state that don't have them now and covers staffing, program expenses, and supports, such as childcare and translation services, so that RHEC members can attend and fully participate. Presently, there are nine RHECs representing 21 counties. The areas that are not currently served by RHECs are some of our most rural areas, including eight of our 10 frontier counties, which face unique healthcare barriers and would benefit from RHECs' specialized capacity to listen locally. SB 530 requires the OHA to fund RHECs in a manner that allows grants to keep pace with rising external costs, such as inflation. Adequate funding is necessary to ensure RHECs can afford to do their work.

RHECs are unique in that they must be representative of communities experiencing health inequities, including low-income individuals and families, persons of color, Tribal communities, migrant and seasonal farmworkers, persons with disabilities, members of LGBTQIA+ communities, and immigrants and refugees. They are also open to other community members, as well. Their work must also be supported by a federally recognized Tribal government or a community-based non-profit, such as a social services provider or a faith-based organization. Our state has a commendable and ambitious goal of eliminating health inequities by 2030.¹ Simply put, we cannot achieve this goal without creating and maintaining spaces for the people who experience health inequities the most to meaningfully contribute to this work. SBs 528 and 530 will sustain the RHECs already doing great work and expand these opportunities to more Oregonians, especially those in our most rural and frontier communities.

Thank you for your consideration of SBs 528 and 530.

Sincerely,

Bridget Budbill

The Oregon Law Center's mission is to achieve justice for low-income communities in Oregon by providing a full range of the highest quality civil legal services.

¹ Oregon Health Authority Strategic Plan (2024-2027), <https://www.oregon.gov/oha/pages/strategic-plan.aspx>.