

Submitter: Courtney Acosta
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Health Care
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB528

Chair Patterson, Vice-Chair Hayden, and Members of the Committee:

I am writing in support of SB 528. My name is Courtney, and I am community member who has been involved with the South Coast RHEC since before it became an official RHEC. SB 528 will provide critical resources to RHECs so they can continue reducing health inequities by identifying the most important issues impacting priority populations in underserved, rural regions of Oregon. By assessing these barriers through grassroots community engagement, they are able to uplift the voices of their communities to create effective solutions through policy and systems change. The expansion of RHECs will ensure that priority populations all over the state are getting their needs met.

I support this bill because I have witnessed the positive impact of a local RHEC on the South Coast. The South Coast Health Equity Coalition (SCHEC) does incredible work, not only to conduct outreach to priority populations, something other agencies often struggle to do, but also to bring members of those populations into critical leadership positions. The result being that crucial advocacy and supportive work is done by members of priority communities, for members of priority communities. I could speak at length of the benefits of the South Coast Health Equity Coalition to our region. Their office alone provides a beacon of safety, support, and joy in a time when the safety and dignity of vulnerable community members are under threat. I work for a local healthcare agency that continues to benefit from SCHEC's consultation services as we seek to improve equity in our policies, procedures, and patient care. I write in support of this bill today because I want to see other rural communities in Oregon benefit from the RHECs like the South Coast has. I also want to see additional funding and support for existing RHECs to continue to do the essential and laborious work that they do. Our rural communities are better and stronger for it.

RHECs are a vital resource for rural Oregon communities. The additional resources to be provided under SB 528 will allow for an immediate increase in Regional Health Equity Coalitions capacity to support the valued priority populations they exist to serve. I urge you to vote yes on SB 528.

Thank you,
Courtney Acosta