

Chair Patterson, Vice Chair Hayden, and members of the Committee,

My name is Esther Kim and I serve as the director of the Oregon Health Equity Alliance, or OHEA, the regional health equity coalition in the Clackamas, Multnomah, and Washington county region. For my time today, I will share a brief history of the RHEC's in Oregon and a bit about what OHEA does.

In 2011, the first two RHEC's, Linn Benton Lincoln Health Equity Coalition and OHEA, were funded by OHA and Northwest Health Foundation with the goal of strengthening community-led health equity advocacy work with our most vulnerable communities.

Since then, six more RHEC's have grown and solidified with state support:

- Mid-Columbia Health Equity Advocates in Hood River and Wasco counties in 2014.
- SO Health-E in Josephine and Jackson counties in 2017 and Eastern Oregon Health Equity Alliance in Morrow, Umatilla, Union, and Malheur counties in 2018.
- And in 2022 we celebrated three new regions joining the RHECs: Health Equity Coalition of Marion, Polk, and Yamhill, RISE of the Umpqua and Willamette Valleys in Lane and Douglas counties, and South Coast Equity Coalition in Coos and Curry counties.

Reflecting on our timeline, I see the sustained need for the representation RHEC's are uniquely positioned to provide ALL Oregonians. RHEC's are the local ear on the ground that help both systems and elected officials know what communities are building for themselves, and where they'd like some help.

Time has also shown that the RHEC model builds political power by preparing community members to become advocates and leaders with CBO's, CCOs, local public health departments, and county commissions. Some even sit in the legislature, shout out to Senator Kayse Jama, one of OHEA's founders.

And speaking of OHEA, our statewide work includes Cover All Kids, tuition equity for immigrant students, and improved REAL-D and SOGI data collection in health and human services. Regionally, we're focused on the impacts of behavioral health service changes, the quality of reproductive and gender affirming care for queer and trans people of color, and continuing to prioritize protections from COVID-19 and other transmittable, infectious diseases. Since our inception we've covered a lot of ground, and in my tenure our priority has been to champion for disabled people in a time of unique and severe threat and incredible resilience.

Thank you for your time and consideration in support of SB 528.