

Submitter: Dharma Mirza
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 to express my strong support for SB 528. My name is Dharmakrishna Mirza and I am a member of the Inn Benton Lincoln health equity alliance, public health professional, and public servant on multiple health policy councils, but most importantly in writing today as a community member. SB 528 is vital in providing crucial resources to Regional Health Equity Coalitions (RHECs) to continue their critical work in addressing health inequities in rural and underserved communities across Oregon. By utilizing grassroots community engagement, RHECs can identify the most pressing issues and advocate for meaningful change in policies and systems.

The expansion of RHECs, as proposed by this bill, will ensure that communities across the state, especially those in rural areas, have access to the support and resources they need to thrive.

I support this bill because the benefits of RHECs are not provided through the normative health structures and systems that we have available to us. I know from my personal experience is navigating complex medical oppression due to my identities as a transgender woman of color, the first generation immigrant, disabled person, person in recovery, Survivor of trauma, and as HIV positive queer and intersex person, that regional health equity coalitions are lifelines for our communities and are able to meet our needs and ways that other systems are not able to they provide us with options and agency and eliminate the need for reliance on paternalistic medical systems that often have profits in mind over people. As a health researcher and public Health a PhD student I study the impact of different health systems and have deeply analyzed their impacts on our communities I know that for the most marginalized individuals in our communities we rely on regional health equity coalitions. Not because we have to rely on something else to take care of our communities but because these coalitions are made up of our communities! There is a resounding impact in being able to affect the change that we need to see in our health and to not support the regional health equity coalition would be a disservice to your constituents.

This bill will significantly increase the capacity of RHECs to support our communities. I strongly urge you to vote in favor of SB 528.

Thank you,
Dharmakrishna Mirza