

3-5-2025

To the House Committee on Behavioral Health and Health Care,

I am writing to express my strong support for House Bill 2222, which aims to establish sustainable funding mechanisms and provide much-needed support for Mobile Integrated Health (MIH) providers in Oregon. The introduction of this bill will not only address the immediate needs of underserved communities but also improve healthcare delivery for some of Oregon's most vulnerable populations.

MIH represents an innovative and effective model of care that brings health services directly to patients in their homes or community settings. By utilizing specially trained Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs), paramedics, community health workers (CHWs), and other allied health professionals, MIH professionals can provide chronic disease management, preventative care, and wraparound health services essential for improving patient outcomes and reducing unnecessary hospitalizations.

I have been involved with EMS in my community of Spray in very rural Wheeler County, Oregon for the last 20 years. I'm an active volunteer EMT-Intermediate medic for 17 years, worked for the local health clinic as a Community Health Worker (CHW) for eight years, and just one year ago I became a Certified Community Paramedic (CP-C).

All of our ambulance personnel are volunteers in Wheeler County. Due to the burden of working a full-time job while also volunteering for the ambulance, one of our largest communities, Fossil, lost their last two EMTs and closed their doors. This happened in July 2024, and today there is still no ambulance in Fossil; coverage is provided by my very small volunteer agency, Spray Ambulance, which is 40-45 minutes away.

Between my service on the ambulance and the years I spent as a CHW, I am painfully aware of the lack of in-home patient healthcare and support services. Our rural residents are utilizing a hospital emergency department far too often. They are presenting with serious, life-threatening conditions that could have been properly managed with in-home intervention providing earlier medical care, and dedicated, sustained oversight. Our rural residents are often isolated, unsure of medical coverage, and are frankly falling through the cracks in our healthcare system.

It is my strong belief that the real, sustainable solution to our serious rural predicament is to utilize an MIH program, that enables the skilled EMS volunteers to have a pathway to a healthcare job. But currently the economic landscape doesn't make the creation of an MIH program financially feasible in a rural region. This simply must change.

I strongly urge your support for House Bill 2222 and encourage you to take action to ensure that this important legislation moves forward. The recognition and support of MIH will lead to improved health outcomes, enhanced care access, and a more sustainable and equitable healthcare system in Oregon.

If you have any questions, please contact me at 541-771-7331. I appreciate your time and thoughtful consideration.

Sincerely,
Joan Field
Spray Volunteer Ambulance, Inc
PO Box 190, Spray, OR 97874