

Submitter: Sara Stephens

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Health Care

Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB529

Chair and Members of the Committee,

I am writing to express strong support for Senate Bill 529, which seeks to improve reimbursement and reduce supervision barriers for Traditional Health Workers (THWs) in Oregon. Over the last year, the Southwestern Workforce Investment Board (SOWIB) has been training THWs and it's clear we must advocate for policies that will better support THWs and the critical services they provide.

THWs are essential in addressing social determinants of health by providing preventative care and social services to underserved communities. However, current reimbursement models and supervision requirements do not adequately support their work.

The existing reimbursement system is limited, and bureaucratic supervision requirements create unnecessary obstacles. Furthermore, diagnosis and treatment plan requirements restrict access to preventative services, which can prevent vulnerable individuals from seeking care. The lack of sufficient service codes and low reimbursement rates make it difficult for community-based organizations to sustain these vital services, limiting access to care for those who need it most. The current system overlooks the importance of preventative services and creates barriers for those in need. Without stable funding, we risk undermining continuity of care and workforce retention.

Proposed Solutions:

Expand billing codes for THW services

Simplify supervision requirements

Remove diagnosis barriers for reimbursement

Direct and streamline contracting with THWs and their organizations

SB 529 is an important step toward ensuring that THWs can continue to serve Oregon's most vulnerable populations effectively. I urge you to support this legislation.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sara Stephens | Interim Executive Director

Southwestern Oregon Workforce Investment Board (SOWIB)

Cell: 541-290-9557

Office: 458-310-8603

www.sowib.org