

March 6<sup>th</sup>, 2025

Oregon State Legislature  
House Committee on Behavioral Health and Health Care  
900 Court Street NE  
Salem, Oregon 97301

Dear Chair Nosse, Co-Chairs Javadi and Nelson, and Members of the House Committee on Behavioral Health and Health Care,

Project Access NOW (PANOW) is a community-based organization providing access to health care and health-related resources for underserved communities in the Portland metro region and across Oregon. We're writing today to encourage you to **do the right thing for Oregonians and vote YES on HB 2216** to explore new reimbursement models and billing mechanisms for Community Health Workers (CHWs) in our state.

Last year, PANOW's team of Community Health Workers completed over 1,200 navigation encounters, serving individuals with complex needs and assisting with a myriad of services like care coordination, insurance enrollment, and connections to housing, food, and other social resources. It's no secret that health system navigation poses a significant barrier to access to care for many Oregonians, and the guidance of a CHW can be critical to getting individuals the culturally responsive care, coverage, and resources they need to get and stay healthy. This team plays a vital role in improving individual and population health in the region, acting as a trusted resource to marginalized communities.

Unfortunately, funding for CHW services presents a host of sustainability challenges, with most opportunities being found in restrictive grants or one-time allocations by Coordinated Care Organizations or other payers. While limited Medicaid reimbursement pathways exist, understanding and accessing these pathways can be challenging for small organizations due to administrative burden, technical challenges, and inconsistency across payers. Due to the unsustainable funding landscape and a lack of technical and administrative support, CHW programs across the state are often on the verge of shuttering. These programs are based in community trust, and when they're forced to close due to unsustainable funding, that trust is eroded, often irreparably.

We believe that HB 2216 is the next step towards sustainable funding for the critical work that CHWs do in our communities. This legislation would direct the Oregon Health Authority to study and assess much-needed sustainable solutions for the future of CHW work in Oregon: payment models and billing mechanisms that allow CHWs to focus on



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helping communities thrive. We ask that you support this legislation and help protect and grow this vital resource for Oregonians.

Thank you,

Peter Merritt  
Public Affairs Manager  
Project Access NOW