



March 4, 2025

TO: Chair Nosse and members of the House Committee On Behavioral Health & Health Care

FROM: Association of Oregon Counties Legislative Affairs Manager, Jessica Pratt

RE: Support HB 2224-3

Dear Chair Nosse and members of the committee,

On behalf of the Association of Oregon Counties, representing Oregon's county governments, I am writing to thank you for introducing HB 2224 and to ask for your support to improve the coordination and governance of Oregon's publicly-funded local health systems and add invaluable public health expertise to Oregon Health Plan advisory bodies.

County boards are the Local Mental Health Authority and the Local Public Health Authority, with the statutory obligation to plan and administer the behavioral health and public health safety net for the whole community, regardless of their insurance status or ability to pay. Counties are also the critical connection between the courts, law enforcement, homelessness and disabilities services, and other local partners to ensure a complete continuum of services that foster public safety and maximize wellbeing.

To do that, it is critical that counties have a close connection to the governance of the Coordinated Care Organizations that are entrusted with the management of Oregon Health Plan resources in our communities.

CCOs were originally designed to be locally governed and accountable to the communities they serve. However, without a formal requirement for county representation, many counties have struggled to ensure that local public health and

behavioral health needs are meaningfully addressed in CCO decision-making. HB 2224-3 corrects this oversight by ensuring every county has a seat on the CCO governing bodies that serve their constituents.

Prior to the creation of Coordinated Care Organizations, Oregon Health Plan dollars for mental health were managed regionally by nine Mental Health Organizations whose boards consisted of county commissioners from every county served, community mental health program directors and community members.

With the sea change to CCOs, the tie between OHP funds administration and local health authorities and the local safety net was severed and has been only partially restored in the ensuing years. It is time to repair the disconnect with the remaining 17 counties.

When we discussed this proposal with CCOs last summer, there was legitimate concern raised about a CCO that serves many counties and the potentially significant increase in the size of that board. To address the concern, the -3 amendment caps the number of new voting members at a total of four.

HB 2224 enhances financial transparency and public accountability by giving the popularly-elected Local Mental Health Authority a voice in decision-making while also fostering better collaboration to meet shared health care goals.

This is a low burden, high impact system improvement measure with no fiscal impact. Please recommend passage of HB 2224-3 and thank you for partnering with counties to serve all of Oregon.

Jessica Pratt
Legislative Affairs Manager
Association of Oregon Counties