

Submitter: Crissy Oyervides
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Health Care
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB529

To the Senate Committee on Health Care,

My name is Crissy Oyervides, and I serve as Director of Peer Training at Youth Era, a community-based organization dedicated to empowering young people through peer support, workforce training, and leadership development. I am writing in strong support of SB 529, which would require the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) and coordinated care organizations (CCOs) to contract directly with Traditional Health Workers (THWs), community health registered nurses, and community-based organizations (CBOs) to provide services to medical assistance recipients.

As a CBO that trains and supports THWs, we see firsthand the critical role that these workers play in meeting the needs of underserved communities. Peer support specialists, community health workers, and other THWs provide culturally responsive, trauma-informed, and lived-experience-based care that bridges the gap between clinical providers and the individuals they serve. Yet, despite their impact, THWs and the CBOs that train them often struggle with sustainability due to complex funding barriers and lack of direct contracting opportunities.

By allowing direct contracts between THWs, CBOs, and OHA/CCOs, SB 529 ensures that community-driven organizations—who are closest to the people in need—can effectively provide support without unnecessary administrative hurdles. This shift would:

Expand access to vital community-based services for Oregon's most vulnerable populations.

Enhance workforce retention and sustainability by ensuring fair compensation for THWs and the organizations that train them.

Strengthen culturally and linguistically responsive care by investing in providers who understand and reflect the communities they serve.

At Youth Era, we train young adult peer support specialists and Wraparound youth partners—both recognized THWs—to support youth experiencing mental health challenges, foster care transitions, and housing instability. The impact of their work is undeniable, yet the current system makes it difficult for them and their employers to be adequately funded for the services they provide. SB 529 would be a transformative step toward equitable access to behavioral health services in Oregon.

I urge the committee to pass SB 529 and support the sustainability of THWs and CBOs that provide essential care in our communities. Thank you for your time and

consideration.

Sincerely,
Crissy Oyervides
Director of Wraparound and Peer Training Programs
Youth Era
Statewide - Oregon