

March 6, 2025



RE: Support for HB 2216

Chair Nosse and members of the House Committee on Behavioral Health and Health Care,

I am writing in support of House Bill 2216, which tasks the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) with assessing fee-for-service and non-fee-for-service reimbursements for Community Health Workers, and to provide technical assistance to ensure sustainable billing mechanisms for this essential workforce.

Community Health Workers (CHWs) are frontline public health workers who are trusted members of the communities they serve. They coordinate care, help patients identify resources, deliver in-home services, and provide ongoing support resulting in improved health outcomes for patients and cost savings to the health system. They are essential health facilitators, particularly for those at high risk, including the elderly, those with chronic conditions, the housing insecure, and those in rural health care deserts.

Currently, many CHW services are unsustainably funded through grants or one-time allocations by CCOs or other payers. While limited Medicaid reimbursement pathways exist, understanding and accessing these pathways is administratively burdensome, technically challenging, and inconsistent across the state and between organization types. With major gaps in sustainable funding pathways and technical assistance, important CHW services are under constant threat of discontinuation. And when these programs end, trust within the communities they serve is eroded.

I am passionate about ensuring that CHWs are recognized and compensated equitably for their invaluable contributions to the healthcare field. CHWs bridge critical gaps in healthcare by bringing lived experience, cultural competency, and linguistic skills that cannot be taught in a classroom. The deep understanding CHWs have of the systemic barriers faced by the communities they serve makes them essential members of the healthcare team.

For many, especially bilingual individuals, acting as interpreters for their families from young age has been a reality – navigating complex systems like healthcare and education long before they enter the workforce. CHWs formalize that role, ensuring that underserved communities receive care that is accessible, equitable, and culturally responsive.

Advocating for a living wage for CHWs isn't just about equitable pay – it's about valuing expertise, sustaining impact, and improving health outcomes for all Oregonians.

We need Community Health Workers to be able to continue the valuable work they do for Oregon's Medicaid population; however, without clear funding pathways and support, many of these service providers will not be able to overcome existing financial and administrative burdens. HB 2216 is the first step in developing long-term, sustainable billing mechanisms for CHWs, improving community health while providing cost savings to the health system.

On behalf of our community's health, we ask for your support on HB 2216.

Sincerely,

Kristinia Rogers
Senior Traditional Health Worker Liaison
Trillium Community Health Plan