

Representative Susan McLain

House District 29



March 11, 2025

RE: Support for House Bill 3650 in the House Committee on Behavioral Health and Health Care

Dear Chair Nosse, Vice Chairs Nelson and Javadi, and Members of the Committee,

I am writing to express my strong support for **House Bill 3650** and to thank you for hearing it in the House Committee on Behavioral Health and Health Care today. I support HB 3650 because it provides us a path forward in improving the quality of health care and reducing health disparities for Oregon's Latino communities. If you need evidence that the approach this bill outlines will work, look no further than my district and the incredible work of the Virginia Garcia Memorial Health Center.

Most Latinos face disparities in accessing quality health care, which contributes to a higher percentage of adverse health outcomes. According to Pew Research, Latinos are less likely than other Americans to have health insurance and to receive preventative medical care, and 52% say they have had negative experiences with a health care provider at some point in their life.

Efforts to improve health care experiences, increase the frequency of visits, and enhance overall health outcomes for Latinos must address both language barriers and the current scarcity of culturally appropriate providers. Currently, only 7% of all physicians and surgeons are Hispanic, and just 9% of all health care practitioners and technicians are Hispanic, so growing the Latino provider workforce is essential to improving access to culturally and linguistically appropriate health care services.

As I mentioned above, Virginia Garcia Medical Center's success in Western Washington County demonstrates the efficacy of meeting patients where they are at, whether it be in terms of culture, language, or geography. Virginia Garcia's mission is to "provide high-quality, comprehensive, and culturally appropriate primary health care to the communities of Washington and Yamhill counties with a special emphasis on migrant and seasonal farmworkers and others with barriers to receiving care." The health clinic began with one office in a converted garage in 1975 and has grown into a health organization comprised of eighteen clinics with over five hundred employees that served over 52,000 patients in 2023.

Virginia Garcia has approached health care from a systems perspective. It supports access to basic health services and provides assistance with transportation, insurance eligibility and enrollment, home visits, mobile clinics, and health education programs for patients and community members. It offers comprehensive wrap-around services, including mental health care, dental care, primary care, and an in-house pharmacy, all in one place. It is an integrated approach that addresses the complex needs of our community and contributes to the improved overall health and well-being of its patients. Virginia Garcia has achieved a Tier 4 rating as a Patient Centered Primary Care Home and recognition as "a statewide model for providing authentic team-based care" by the Oregon Health Authority. In its CenteringPregnancy program, the rate of babies born at low birth weight was 4.4 percent, almost half the national average of 8 percent.

The Latino community in my district is fortunate to have Virginia Garcia as a health care option. The reason I am supporting HB 3650 is because I want to see Oregon replicate this model of care in as many communities as possible across the state. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you would like to discuss HB 3650 in more detail. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Representative Susan McLain