

March 25, 2025

Chair Nosse and the House Behavioral Health & Health Care Committee,

I am writing to express strong support for House Bill 3916, designed to provide \$5 million per biennium to help train Community Health Workers, Community Paramedics and the local public health workforce in Oregon.

I understand that the \$5 million allocated in the bill will be split among two organizations:

The Oregon Community Health Workers Association (ORCHWA) will receive \$1.5 million to train more CHWs. CHWs play an important role as links in their communities to available health and social services, offering connections to resources and improving access to, and quality of, care. Resources to support the training and development of these community-embedded professionals is limited, which not only hinders access to care for under-resourced community members but also prevents individuals from entering and advancing within this essential profession.

The Oregon Office of Rural Health (ORH) will receive \$2 million to help local public health entities recruit, train and retain their workforce, and \$1.5 million to train and expand the community paramedic and mobile integrated healthcare workforce. Having worked as a community paramedic since 2017, I am especially hopeful that this valuable career can be extended throughout the State to grant access to healthcare for those who have least access to it due to geographic, economic or worker shortages. Workforce shortages are especially severe in rural or under-resourced areas where salaries are typically lower and there is less access to the necessary training and education, but where the need for, and usefulness of, community paramedics is more pronounced.

Community paramedics visit people in their homes and community settings to bring various aspects of healthcare to them, or to link them to resources that can improve both their health and their quality of life. Public Health agencies have used community paramedics to assist at vaccination efforts (for instance, during the COVID-19 pandemic, when I among other CPs administered COVID shots throughout Columbia County to people who could not get their shots through other means), or to help with the mobile clinic vans for assessments and screenings, or to help manage diabetes. CPs work to reduce systemic burdens on the 911 transport agencies, the emergency departments and hospital in-patient settings, to improve the patients' experience of and satisfaction with their healthcare and to lower the cost of healthcare overall.

I urge you to support and fund HB 3916 to provide workforce development support that will diversity and expand the public health workforce to improve access to, and quality of, care for all Oregonians.

Thank you!

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