

Submitter: Mary Sawyers

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Behavioral Health and Health Care

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3916

Chair Nosse and esteemed legislators,

I write to express my strong support for House Bill 3916, which will provide \$5 million per biennium to help train Community Health Workers (CHWs), Community Paramedics (CPs), and the local public health workforce in Oregon.

High rates of burnout and turnover in the public health workforce were made even worse by the COVID-19 pandemic – and as many as half of the workforce said they were planning to retire or leave their jobs by the end of 2025. Workforce shortages are especially acute in rural and underserved areas where salaries are lower and there is less access to higher education.

The \$5 million allocated in HB 3916 will be split among two organizations.

The Oregon Office of Rural Health (ORH) will receive \$2 million to help local public health recruit, train and retain their workforce and \$1.5 million to train and expand the community paramedic and mobile integrated health workforce.

Community paramedics reduce emergency department visits, 911 calls and hospital readmissions by visiting people in their homes and community settings. Public health would also like to use CPs in mobile health vans to help people manage diabetes, test for sexually transmitted diseases and to assist at community vaccine clinics.

The Oregon Community Health Workers Association (ORCHWA) will receive \$1.5 million to train more community health workers.

CHWs link people in their community to social services and health care. They are in high demand, yet there are few resources in Oregon to support their training.

I urge you to support and fund HB 3916 to provide training incentives that will diversify and expand the public health workforce, improving access and quality of care for all Oregonians.

Thank you for supporting our public health workforce!