

# Health Department

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March 25, 2023

Behavioral Health and Health Care Committee  
900 Court St. NE  
Salem, Oregon 97301

**Subject: Support for HB 3916 - Funding workforce development for Community Health Workers, Community Paramedics and Local Public Health Departments.**

Chair Nosse, Vice-Chair Javadi, and members of the Committee on Behavioral Health and Health Care:

Thank you for the opportunity to express Multnomah County's support for HB 3916, which addresses critical workforce development challenges for Community Health Workers (CHWs), Community Paramedics (CPs), and local public health (LPH) departments in Oregon. This bill represents a much-needed investment in the health workforce and will help ensure that Oregon communities have access to essential health and public health services.

CHWs are frontline public health workers who generally come from and/or share life experience with the communities that they serve. This community connection creates a high demand for the important role CHWs play as a link to available health and social services, facilitating connections to resources and improving access to and quality of care. In public health, we utilize CHWs in home visits with new parents and babies, and also in clinical services such as reproductive health screenings and tuberculosis case management. Despite the demonstrated impact of their work, resources to support the training and development of these professionals is limited. This gap not only hinders access to care but also prevents individuals from entering and advancing within this essential profession. HB 3916's proposal to allocate funding will enable the expansion of training programs and provide crucial support for CHWs to serve the diverse needs of our communities.

Similarly, Community Paramedics (CPs) are an emerging provider type that has shown significant promise in reducing emergency department utilization, 911 call volume, and 30-day readmissions. In public health, we want to utilize CPs in our mobile health vans to help folks manage their diabetes, rapid test for sexually transmitted diseases, and assist at community vaccine clinics. HB 3916's proposed funding will provide the

resources needed to develop and sustain Community Paramedic programs, improving health outcomes and reducing strain on our emergency services.

Local public departments are facing severe workforce challenges. High rates of burnout, turnover, and difficulty in recruitment were exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The need for skilled professionals in these areas is critical, but many communities lack access to higher education, which further complicates recruitment. HB 3916's funding will help address these challenges by supporting workforce development, training, and retention, ensuring that public health departments can continue to serve our communities effectively.

Multnomah County works closely with the Oregon Health Authority certified CHW training programs who provide culturally and linguistically-specific and cross-cultural CHW certification training. Additionally, we provide technical assistance to CHW training programs throughout Oregon, including rural, frontier, urban and suburban areas. Creating a mechanism whereby training participants would receive the necessary financial support to obtain and maintain their CHW certification would undoubtedly improve health outcomes across the state.

HB 3916 will make a big impact in mitigating pressing public health workforce issues. By providing funding to the Oregon Community Health Worker Association and Oregon Office of Rural Health, the bill will foster growth in essential healthcare and public health sectors, expand training opportunities, and provide much-needed financial support to trainees and employers alike.

Please reach out to me if you have any further questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kirsten Aird". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "K" and a stylized "A".

Kirsten Aird, MPH  
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