

Submitter: Connie Hunter  
On Behalf Of: HB 3773  
Committee: House Committee On Emergency Management, General Government, and Veterans  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3773

Chair Tran, Vice Chairs Grayber and Lewis, and members of the Committee,

In support of HB 3773, creating the rule qualification criteria for veteran-specific personal health navigators as an additional category of traditional health workers. As part of the volunteer work that I have done over approximately seven years, I have participated in the Curry Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) Coalition at times as facilitator and at times a member of their Access to Health Care workgroup. With the roll-out of Oregon's Traditional Health Worker workforce development efforts, it did not take long to see that there was a need for Veteran-specific personal health navigators. As a veterans advocate spanning fifty years, I can note the fact that the VA does not provide case management consistently or in-depth support for healthcare navigation through their patients' advocates program which leaves the State of Oregon in the position to try fill this gap in care. HB 3773 directly targets this gap in care which is currently and previously forced on family members, caregivers (who may or may not have experience as healthcare navigators), and providers who have not received specific training to serve the unique and complicated needs of our Veterans.

My ongoing work includes helping veterans navigate healthcare systems whether VA or Community Based providers and other benefits. Many times I get referrals when there is great frustration with a broken system or a crisis or a referral from a provider, community members, law enforcement, veterans-serving nonprofits such as VFW. disparity in services delivered to our Veterans in rural areas. In Curry County, where we have high per capita numbers of veterans and a very high rate of suicide among our veterans, providing both training and funding for providers to staff Personal Health Navigators is key to a reality-based, easily implemented opportunity to help fix a system that has not served Oregon Veterans well to date. Not only will access to healthcare and mental healthcare be improved, family members may receive a the kind of respite that they deserve and need.

Thank you for your attention to this very significant bill which will fix much for Oregon Veterans and especially Veterans who live in rural areas. This workforce training will help pick up where the VA system leaves off.