

Co-Chairs Sanchez, Lieber, and members of the Joint Ways and Means Committee:

My name is Liliana Lachino, and I serve as the Supervisor for Mid-Columbia Health Equity Advocates (MCHEA), our local Regional Health Equity Coalition (RHEC) in the Gorge. I am here today to urge your strong support of SB 5006; specifically, SB 528, RHEC expansion, and SB 530, adjusting RHEC budgets for the cost of doing business.

MCHEA is composed of three diverse set of groups who primarily include Latino and Native Americans in the Gorge. Today, I want to highlight one key area of our health equity work: language access in driver's license exams.

Since Oregon passed Driver's Licenses for All in 2021, our coalition has repeatedly heard from community members who struggle to pass the driver's license knowledge exam in Spanish. The failure rates for non-English exams are consistently higher than for English speakers, and they continue to rise each year. This happens because the language in the Driver Manual does not match the language in the exam, and much of the material is not written in plain, accessible terms.

To fix this, we have been working closely with the Oregon Department of Transportation and have presented our concerns to the Oregon Advocacy Commissions Office and other statewide partners. Right now, we are collaborating with Representative Nelson and Representative Muñoz on HB 2990, which would improve language accessibility for the Class-C driver's license exam and Driver Manual in the five most common languages in Oregon. Ensuring language equity in these materials is a matter of public safety—it helps all Oregonians drive safely and legally.

Funding RHEC expansion and cost of business adjustment will provide critical resources to RHECs so we can continue to support in reducing health inequities by identifying the most important issues impacting priority populations in underserved, rural regions of Oregon. By assessing these barriers through grass roots community engagement and advocacy, we are able to uplift the voices of our communities by creating solutions to barriers through policy and systems change. The expansion and cost of business adjustment for RHECs will ensure that priority populations all over the state are getting their needs met.

This resource is vital to our community and these resources will allow for an immediate increase in Regional Health Equity Coalitions capacity to support them. I urge you to fund SB 528 and SB 530 by voting yes on SB 5006.

Thank you for your time and your service.

Liliana Lachino

Mid-Columbia Health Equity Advocates Supervisor