



April 24, 2025

Dear Co-Chairs and Members of the Committee,

I am writing to emphasize the critical importance of continued investment in healthcare benefits for essential workers in Oregon's long-term care sector. As an employer in this industry, Avamere @ Waterford and Three Fountains, understands that access to high-quality, affordable healthcare is a key factor in attracting and retaining a stable workforce. The Essential Worker Healthcare Trust (EWHT) has played a vital role in ensuring caregivers have comprehensive, cost-effective healthcare benefits, which support the recruitment and retention of the dedicated professionals who care for some of Oregon's most vulnerable residents. Continued funding for programs like EWHT is essential to maintaining a strong and sustainable long-term care workforce.

The plan that is offered through the EWHT is truly a selling point for our prospective employees. Many of our new employees have chosen to work with our organization specifically based on the plans that we are able to offer with the help of the EWHT. Once our candidates become employees and have been able to benefit from the EWHT plan show they appreciate the benefit plans by remaining employees of the facility. We struggle with employee retention and our turnover rate has decreased because of the program that EWHT has been able to provide.

Many of our entry level employees have been able to benefit from the EWHT program due mainly to the low cost of the plans that are available through this program. With that, our employees are now able to seek medical treatment early, before an illness may require the employees to miss scheduled shifts. The plans offered encourage preventative care and have low and sometimes now cost for generic drugs. The fear of going into debt to be treated for a health issue is lessened with the EWHT program.

I have been employed with this facility for nearly 15 years, and I have seen the difference in our staff when they have affordable healthcare available to them. The employees will seek care before the issue becomes so severe that they must go to the emergency room, which may cause them to be out of work for extended periods of time. We are in the business of taking care of the aging population. If our staff is not healthy, then who is there to care of our seniors. If the plans offered by EWHT were to be no longer available, our team would

most likely not be able to afford the care they may need, and this could impact the quality of care available to our residents.

Ongoing investment in the Essential Worker Healthcare Trust is an investment in Oregon's long-term care workforce, ensuring that we can continue to provide quality care to those who need it most.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kathy Stewart".

Kathy Stewart

Human Resources

Avamere @ Waterford & Three Fountains