

## South Coast Health Equity Coalition

Serving Coos & Curry County

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Dear Chair Patterson and members of the Senate Health Care Committee,

My name is Jess Howell, and I serve as the Advocacy Coordinator for the South Coast Health Equity Coalition, serving Coos and Curry Counties.

SCHEC is a BIPOC- and 2SLGBTQIA+-led Regional Health Equity Coalition rooted in advancing health equity and addressing the social determinants of health in rural coastal communities. Our work focuses on reducing barriers to care, building trust in public systems, and ensuring that people can access essential services without fear or discrimination.

I strongly support SB 1570 because healthcare settings must be places of safety, for patients *and* for the workers who care for them. In our rural healthcare desert, people already face long travel times, limited providers, and delayed care. Increasingly, fear of immigration enforcement inside medical settings is causing people to avoid appointments, postpone treatment, or disengage from care altogether.

This fear harms entire communities. Immigrant, refugee, BIPOC, and mixed-status families are less likely to seek preventive care, mental health services, or urgent treatment when they worry that enforcement actions could occur inside clinics or hospitals. That erodes trust in healthcare systems and worsens public health outcomes for everyone.

It is also critical that we recognize the impact this fear has on healthcare practitioners themselves. Nurses, doctors, medical assistants, and support staff should not be placed in the impossible position of choosing between caring for their patients and navigating enforcement activity in their workplace. Healthcare workers are trained to provide care, not to manage law enforcement encounters, protect patient confidentiality under pressure, or put themselves at personal or professional risk.

SB 1570 helps protect healthcare workers by setting clear boundaries and expectations, so they can do their jobs safely and ethically without fear of retaliation, legal exposure, or escalation in already stressful environments. Supporting providers in this way helps retain a

fragile rural workforce and ensures that care remains accessible in communities that cannot afford to lose even one provider.

From what I see on the ground, SB 1570 would bring real relief to patients who need care and to healthcare workers who deserve safe, stable workplaces. It affirms a simple principle: healthcare settings should be places of healing, trust, and dignity, not fear.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge your support for SB 1570.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,  
Jess Howell  
Advocacy Coordinator  
South Coast Health Equity Coalition