



Memorandum

To: Chair Patterson, Vice-Chair Hayden, and Members of the Committee

From: Marty Carty, Director of Government Affairs, The Oregon Primary Care Association

Date: March 20, 2023

Re: SB 1076 (Support)

The Oregon Primary Care Association (OPCA) is a non-profit organization, with a mission to support Oregon's 34 Community Health Centers (CHCs), also known as Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs), in leading the transformation of primary care to achieve health equity for all. Health centers deliver integrated primary, behavioral, mental, and oral health care services to over **436,000 Oregonians**. 41% of [health center patients](#) identify as a racial or ethnic minority, 18% are uninsured, and 3% are veterans. FQHCs provide care to some of Oregon's most vulnerable populations, including **one in four Oregon Health Plan (OHP) members**. They care for all patients, regardless of insurance type, ability to pay, and citizenship. FQHCs operate more than 270 care delivery sites in Oregon's communities where their patients live and work – urban, rural, and frontier -- ensuring consistent access to treatment with trusted professionals.

We encourage your support for Senate Bill 1076, which addresses the equitable treatment of people experiencing houselessness upon discharge from the hospital. Oregon's Community Health Centers provide holistic, individualized care to every patient, including the 14% who are experiencing houselessness. Hospital discharge and release from emergency departments are pivotal moments, especially for patients who are vulnerable to the impacts of social drivers of health like houselessness, food insecurity, and inadequate access to transportation. Hospital discharge policies have a key role in determining whether a patient accesses a primary care provider and in assuring patient safety. The provisions included in SB 1076 would help ensure continuity of care and connection to community resources for patients experiencing houselessness. It will reduce incidences of preventable patient exposure to harm, like hazardous weather, intimate partner violence, and trafficking, and ultimately, will save lives.

A 2020 study in the journal [Healthcare Policy](#) stated that, “Developing targeted, contextually flexible interventions and specific policies and practices around discharge planning that meet the needs of people experiencing homelessness is urgently needed.” SB 1076 does just that – it creates a plan which directs hospital staff to follow specific steps to ensure patient safety, while also creating flexibility and autonomy for the patient being discharged. The study also makes the case for the importance of data. SB 1076 will enhance data on who is seeking crisis care at hospitals and open a window to their primary care providers to better understand what happens to them post-discharge.

Community Health Centers are integrated into the safety net, wrapping care around patients, and ensuring their needs are met, even if those needs are outside the medical scope. Hospitals must have consistent and transparent policies around the discharge of patients experiencing houselessness so they can be a vital bridge from crisis care to community care. This population should not fall through the cracks of the health care system

and be put at risk of further harm simply because they do not have a home to return to at night. For these reasons, OPCA urges your support of SB 1076.