

Health Policy and Analytics Medicaid Waiver Renewal Team
Attn: Michelle Hatfield

RE: 1115 Medicaid Demonstration Renewal Comments

Dear Oregon Health Authority:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the 1115 Medicaid Demonstration Renewal. My name is Bobby Cochran. I am writing as an Oregon resident, and someone with a background in health equity as a Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Culture of Health Leader, and 20 years of supporting health in rural and urban communities at the intersections of environment, community development, and health. For me, this renewal application lines up with what years of community voices and science-based research has said—that our health is as much connected to our zip codes as our genetic codes. There are several critical elements of this knowledge that are important to retain:

A requirement that CCOs invest at least 33% of the 3% of their global budgets with community investment collaboratives with flexible authority to invest in health equity

Community-led investment works—to improve health, and reduce healthcare costs. Oregon has a rich tradition of collaborative decisionmaking that works (from Regional Health Equity Coalitions to Forest Collaboratives to Regional Solutions Centers). When communities have the flexibility to address health equity, they have invested in new transit lines that increase access to primary care AND to jobs. They have invested in youth leadership programs that create new job pathways and community healthworkers. This element is ESSENTIAL to retain. Other states have experimented with investing in health equity and social determinants (e.g., North Carolina), but this innovation is something communities across the United States have asked for. Oregon has the collaborative infrastructure, experience, and data to demonstrate this community-led investment approach will lead to better health and potential savings.

Authority for expenditures on population health and climate supports

Oregon's Waiver Renewal is explicit about the health risks posed by climate change and events such as fire and extreme heat. I appreciate that attention. Climate and other forms of resilience are built through strong social interactions, a health built environment, and the opportunity to earn a good living. Some of the greatest long-term healthcare savings will come from stronger communities who are resilient. The Waiver's flexibility allows Oregon's Medicaid program to direct other investments more directly toward health and health equity in the communities that need it most (e.g., FEMA post-disaster mitigation funds, US Forest Service recreation funds, and HUD housing supports).

Broaden authority to improve climate resilience, not just respond to disaster

The focused equity investment final policy concept paper refers to "Increasing green space and other improvements to the built environment, such as climate resilient housing, can ameliorate the impact of climate change. Further, the evidence linking time outdoors with better mental health and social cohesion is substantial." (p15). Yet the Waiver application itself frames climate supports as a 'response to climate disasters'. There is no explicit request for expenditure authority of federal or OHP funds that would actually build climate equity and resilience. For example, emergency transportation and ability to stay housed is critical during a disaster. But if a community knows that neighborhood greenways and

cooling centers in libraries can prevent catastrophic fire or heat stroke, then investment in those actions should be explicitly authorized as part of the focused equity investments. This framing of “climate supports” runs through the application (from strategy 3 on p 23, to the climate supports on p68). Please add a bullet to the list of Climate Supports on p68 such as, “Increasing access to natural areas with shade.”

This flexible “glue” will help braid services, preventative investments, and disaster response into a more cohesive, effective, and efficient approach to building health so that everyone has the opportunity to thrive—no exceptions.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment!

Sincerely,

Bobby Cochran
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