

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 Aaron Clark and I am a biologist and green infrastructure professional. We are excited to see Oregon's waiver application embrace the science, community voices, and experiences that show how community-led investment leads to health equity. In particular:

We support the 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

My work focuses on improving quality of life in communities through environmental improvement through empowerment, and education in the Pacific Northwest. I have been astounded by the abundant research and personal observations that demonstrate the value of nature as medicine. The health and mental health of our communities is profoundly impacted by nearby nature and environmental quality.

Retain the 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. The science and community wisdom support those linkages. 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,

Aaron D. Clark Ph.D.
Director of Strategic Partnerships
Stewardship Partners