



August 5, 2024

Dr. Sejal Hathi,

At the April 2, 2024 Oregon Health Policy Board (OHPB) meeting, the Health Equity Committee (HEC) presented two community advocacy letters that implore prompt attention and action from Oregon Health Authority (OHA) leadership. One letter represents critical issues identified by community members regarding inequities for Oregon's Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Queer, Trans, Intersex, Asexual, and Two Spirit (LGBTQIA2S+) communities and recommendations to address those inequities. The other letter reinforces the 2022 End-of-Year Report from OHA's Ombudsman Program that recommends critical action to reduce and ultimately eliminate health inequities impacting Oregon Health Plan (OHP) members.

HEC's [Gender Affirming Care Letter](#) outlined specific requests to address the pressing concerns of LGBTQIA2S+ communities, with recommendations including: increased protections, accessibility, and trainings for Gender Affirming Care (GAC); active engagement of LGBTQIA2S+ organizations and voices in policy development and implementation; public statements from OHA, the Governor's office, and OHPB; revising reimbursement policies that raise financial barriers to GAC for people throughout the state; and special considerations for GAC access for youth and rural populations that experience severe inequities.

In its [Ombuds Letter](#), HEC emphasized Ombuds report recommendations including the uplifting and prioritization of member and advocate concerns, strengthening OHA staff responses to community feedback, increasing community representation in decision making, and investment from OHA leadership in the OHA Ombuds program. HEC has asked to be included in an accountability structure for OHA, receiving regular updates on its responses to health equity related issues highlighted in OHA Ombuds semi-annual reports, such as increasing behavioral health care service capacity and home-based treatments for individuals with disabilities.

As a Board, we:

- *Are committed to providing general support and requesting updates on staff work groups / efforts related to GAC and Ombuds' call to increased focus on behavioral health care coordination.*
- *Support staff work groups and committees which focus on identifying and implementing strategies targeting inclusion of diverse perspectives in policy development as part of prioritizing member concerns while mitigating power structures.*
- *Request that the Medicaid Advisory Committee (MAC) advise OHA and OHPB on ways to strengthen Medicaid member engagement.*
- *Request that the Healthcare Workforce Committee advise OHA and OHPB on ways to improve training, hiring and retention of GAC providers.*

- *Are committed to discussing and reviewing SOGI data as provided by OHA regarding access and barriers to GAC services.*
- *Identify and support efforts to address Gender Affirming Care and behavioral health inequities.*
- *Support the HEC's work to host community-led conversations with LGBTQIA2S+ individuals and communities in policy development related to GAC.*

OHPB stands in solidarity with the community action letters from HEC and implore OHA leadership to take immediate action to identify existing and future resources to resolve the gaps in services experienced by Oregon's LGBTQIA2S+ communities and OHP members. OHPB and its eleven Committees, especially HEC and MAC, offer our help to assist OHA with this work requested by community.

We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Brenda Johnson, OHPB Chair

Kirsten Isaacson, OHPB Vice Chair

Dr. Rosemarie Hemmings, OHPB member & HEC liaison

Carly Hood-Ronick, OHPB member & HEC liaison