February 3, 2022

The Honorable Rachel Prusak  
Oregon House of Representatives  
900 Court St. NE, H-489  
Salem, Oregon 97301

Re: Support for HB 4003, Establishing the Healthcare Workforce Advisory Committee to Study the Nursing Workforce Shortage

Dear Chair Prusak,

On behalf of OCHIN, I appreciate the opportunity to offer support for HB 4003, which establishes the Healthcare Workforce Advisory Committee to study the nursing workforce shortage and allows for nurse internship licenses. Oregon is facing critical workforce shortages in community health centers, public health departments, and critical access hospitals. OCHIN is proud to support efforts to alleviate this growing crisis.

OCHIN is an Oregon based [national health research network](#) and continuous learning health system locally-controlled provider collaborative that offers technology solutions, informatics, evidence-based research, and policy insights. OCHIN network members in Oregon provide care to more than 580,000 patients and had more than 2.3 million visits in 2021. For over two decades, OCHIN has advanced equitable health care solutions by leveraging the strength of our network’s unique data set and the practical experience of our members to drive technology innovation at scale for patients and providers in underserved communities.

The impact of COVID-19, including the current Omicron surge, has decimated the workforce among community-based health care organizations that face unprecedented rates of turnover and burnout. The strain on our existing nursing workforce is further exacerbated as the community clinics where they are located have been hard hit by vacancies among support and operational staff. These important staff relieve nurses and other clinicians of administrative duties (including scheduling, check-in, technology support and other essential operational requirements) so nurses can focus on patient care. As a result, community clinics are struggling to maintain capacity and cannot scale to meet growing demand - an alarming trend, since health centers play a critical role in reducing burden on local emergency departments, particularly in rural and underserved communities.

The Committee would be able to consider the evolving role of care teams and the increasing need for technologically trained nurses and support and operational staff as the adoption and implementation of modernized health information technology, which is urgently needed to transform clinical care delivery and improve public health capabilities at scale, will only expand. This Committee is particularly needed in the effort to rebuild the depleted nursing workforce in community health centers; providers that have been among the hardest hit by the pandemic and workforce shortages. Community health centers provide much needed care to some of the most underserved populations in Oregon, ensuring that they have sufficient staffing levels to provide care to all who need it is crucially important and something OCHIN fully supports.

Rebuilding Oregon’s nursing workforce is absolutely necessary for the continued function and sustainability of Oregon’s health care system. Please contact me at [stollj@ochin.org](mailto:stollj@ochin.org) to discuss how we can help to develop the health care workforce Oregon desperately needs.

Sincerely,
Jennifer Stoll
Executive Vice President
External Affairs