

SB 850: Expanding Regional Health Equity Coalitions

Expanding Regional Health Equity Coalitions to cover every county in Oregon would help local communities address their most pressing health equity concerns.

The Benefits of Regional Health Equity Coalitions

Regional Health Equity Coalitions (RHECs) are coalitions of grassroots community leaders and representatives from culturally specific community-based organizations. They work to identify the most important health equity problems in their region for communities of color and other groups experiencing health inequities, and then develop policy and programmatic solutions to those systemic problems.

RHECs have effectively used policy, community engagement, and emergency support to advance health equity in Oregon and have achieved significant progress in health equity. This includes supporting key legislative efforts focused on health equity and systemic issues, including childcare and early education (HB 3005, HB 277), worker relief (HB 3124), climate and environmental justice (SB 918), universal representation (SB 672), and food security (SB 610). Additionally, their efforts include supporting the declaration of racism as a public health crisis (HB 4052) and pushing for flexible equity investments in Medicaid (HB 3353).

Beyond legislation, coalitions have enhanced community health education, provided cultural and language-specific support, and consulted on food justice issues. They have also delivered critical aid during COVID-19 and wildfires, offering financial relief and bilingual education to affected communities.

In addition, RHECs receive many requests each year to participate in an array of health equity efforts in their communities, such as joining local initiatives and providing technical assistance and consultation to other organizations interested in advancing health equity.

RHECs operate independently, with administrative support from OHA.

Currently, 10 RHECs cover 20 counties across the state, but 16 counties remain without RHECs.

Strengthening and Expanding RHECs

Several unrepresented communities, mostly in rural and remote regions, have expressed a desire for a local RHEC. This LC expands RHECs to more counties in Oregon, moving the state closer to statewide representation.

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