



From the House Healthcare Committee

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House Healthcare Committee Reacts to Findings of Continued Racial Health Disparities in Oregon, Report Finds

SALEM, Ore. – A [Commonwealth Fund report](#) released late last week found that Oregon continues to struggle with racial and ethnic health disparities compared to other Western states. Additionally, the report warns that recent federal health care cuts and coverage changes could worsen barriers to care nationwide. In 2021, the Oregon House of Representatives declared racism a public health crisis through [HR 6](#).

“This is not surprising. This is not new. I’ve worked to close racial health disparities since I started in the legislature in 2022. Racial disparities in our healthcare system have been impacting our communities in Oregon as long as most can remember,” said **Rep. Travis Nelson** (D - N & NE Portland), Vice Chair of the Healthcare Committee. “It pains me to continue to see Black Oregonians die needlessly. And it’s a shame that healthcare cuts from the federal government will make this even worse. But I will do everything in my power to close this gap. I call on my colleagues in the legislature to join me in continuing this important work.”

In 2022, [HB 4052](#) funded a [Mobile Health Unit Pilot Program](#) through the Oregon Health Authority and tasked the Oregon Advocacy Commissions Office with facilitating a community centered process to identify [policy recommendations](#) that addresses racism as a public health crisis. In 2023, Representative Nelson sponsored [HB 2925](#) which aligned the timing of the final reports and recommendations from both state agencies.

“This report is deeply troubling, and as chair of the Health Care Committee, I believe we have a responsibility to confront it head on,” said **Rep. Rob Nosse** (D - Inner SE & Inner NE Portland) and Chair of the committee. “Oregon has made major strides over the past decade in expanding coverage and improving access to care. It’s time to roll up our sleeves and work with what Trump has given us – which honestly, isn’t much.”

Recent federal policy changes are expected to increase barriers to care, including Medicaid reductions, stricter marketplace enrollment rules, and the expiration of enhanced premium tax credits. Advocates warn these changes could increase uninsured rates and out-of-pocket costs, particularly for vulnerable communities. This impacts all healthcare, including behavioral health.

“This report already shows Oregonians face health inequities across the entire state. A cut to our healthcare system will cause serious harm to our most vulnerable communities,” said **Rep. Hai Pham** (D - South Hillsboro, SW Beaverton), Healthcare Committee member and Chair of the House Behavioral Health Committee.

The Trump administration’s heightened immigration enforcement has caused many people, including citizens and those with lawful documentation, to avoid seeking care or participating in benefits for which they’re eligible, further exacerbating the discrepancies.

“We know that Latinx communities have less access to health care, clear economic disadvantages, and more physically risky jobs. Trump’s cuts to healthcare have also often been targeted at the immigrant community,” noted **Rep. Lesly Muñoz** (D - Woodburn). “It is unacceptable and irresponsible to strip away funding right now. But that’s what DC has done.”

Health inequities can be felt across Oregon – regardless of location, income, or political party; however, racial disparities are among the most persistent and well documented in the U.S. health care system.

Rep. Cyrus Javadi (D - Tillamook) shared, “These findings should concern every Oregonian, no matter where you live or what party you belong to. We pride ourselves on being a healthy, compassionate state, but this report makes clear that too many people are still being left behind. This should be a wake-up call. Not for partisan talking points, but for action. I look forward to working on this issue in the future.”

Final reports and recommendations from the Oregon Health Authority and the Oregon Advocacy Commissions Office are due to the legislature by June 30, 2026 with the goal of bringing policy recommendations in the 2027 legislative session.

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