

Chiquita Brooks-LaSure
Administrator
Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services
Department of Health and Human Services
7500 Security Boulevard
Baltimore, MD 21244

April 4, 2022

Dear Administrator Brooks-LaSure;

Lane County is writing in support of the 1115(a) Waiver Renewal application submitted in February by the Oregon Health Authority.

Our organization recognizes safe, stable, affordable housing is a key social determinant of health for Oregonians. We have also seen the number of affordable housing options decrease due to the Covid crisis, especially for people with the lowest incomes. This is a challenge housing programs cannot address alone and we applaud the supportive housing opportunities the Medicaid waiver presents to address whole health needs.

For many years, Oregon has been a leader in Medicaid reform with our coordinated care model, which integrates all aspects of health care, focusing on factors outside the traditional health care system that affect health. Our state is asking to deepen that model and begin the necessary transition to a focus on health equity, with particular attention to housing.

In particular, Lane County supports the waiver renewal application's development of social determinant of health transition services to address barriers people face when accessing stable housing, among other health factors. The renewal contemplates housing services and supports which could include:

- Rental assistance or temporary housing for up to 12 months, including rental payments, deposits, past rent, motels;
- Home and community-based services such as ramps, handrails, utility assistance, environmental remediation;
- Pre-tenancy and tenancy support services such as employment services, eviction prevention, housing application, moving support; and
- Housing-focused navigation and/or case manager supports such as exploring traditional health worker integration.

Many of these proposed services fall under the “**Improving health outcomes by streamlining life and coverage transitions**” policies outlined by Oregon. The vision states that “if Oregon is able to provide specific benefit packages to members in transition, we can ensure they stay covered, have important social determinants of health needs met and maintain access to care and medicine.”

As advocates for housing, Lane County supports this vision, which places stable, affordable housing at the center of a health system for people in Oregon.

Finally, we applaud the commitment to further adjusting Oregon's Medicaid system to focus on the deep inequities experienced by communities of color and other marginalized communities in our state.

We believe the proposed 1115 waiver is a significant and greatly needed step forward for the Lane County community and ask for approval.

Sincerely,

Commissioner Pat Farr
Chair, Lane County Board of Commissioners