



OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

Kate Brown, Governor

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The Honorable Governor Kate Brown
254 State Capitol
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Governor Brown:

I am writing to submit my resignation as the director of the Oregon Health Authority, effective January 9, 2023. It has been the honor and privilege of my life and career to serve you and the people of Oregon since 2017. Over the past five years, OHA's staff and our many health care, public health and community partners have been tested in unprecedented ways. They have met every challenge with an unwavering commitment to the health and well-being of people in our state, especially during Oregon's nationally recognized response to the COVID-19 pandemic. I am humbled to have supported them and to have seen the life-saving impact of their work.

The Oregon Health Authority has a vital mission: Under OHA, Oregon has united the regulatory, payment and policy-making tools of the state's Medicaid, public health, behavioral health and health policy programs to give every person in Oregon the opportunity to achieve optimal health and well-being.

However, when you asked me to lead the agency in September 2017, OHA was in crisis. The agency's relationships with stakeholders, legislators and the public had been ruptured and its credibility had been profoundly eroded.

I brought the values that have guided me throughout my career – transparency, accountability and the wise use of public resources – to the task of rebuilding public trust in OHA. Yet, as we rebuilt that trust, we recognized that we could not fulfill our mission while so many communities throughout Oregon continued to experience unfair health disparities caused by historic and present impacts of racism, oppression and genocide. So, the leadership and staff at OHA set a goal to eliminate health inequity in our state by 2030. These values and priorities have enabled OHA to achieve so much during the past five years, achievements that will improve health and the quality of life in communities across the state:

- In 2020, OHA issued new contracts for the coordinated care organizations) that deliver care to more than 1.2 million people on the Oregon Health Plan and receive more than \$7 billion per year in state and federal health care funding. These contracts strengthened CCO accountability to expand access to behavioral health and other services for OHP members and successfully shifted CCO service area boundaries without any disruption in services to members.
- Over the past five years, Oregon has expanded health coverage to all children and to other vulnerable people. Today, more than 95% of people in Oregon are covered

by OHP, Medicare or a commercial health plan. The Oregon Health Plan now covers nearly 1 in 3 Oregonians.

- Driven by your vision and leadership, OHA recently negotiated a new Section 1115 Medicaid Waiver with the federal government that once again catapults Oregon to the forefront of health care innovation in the United States. Under the new waiver, Oregon will expand and extend health coverage for children and adults, provide ground-breaking Medicaid benefit coverage for housing assistance and food and coverage for services and supports that will help people in Oregon navigate the health issues caused by climate change.
- Despite battling a global pandemic, OHA has shored up Oregon's behavioral health system and laid the foundation to expand services. By the end of 2022, OHA will have spent or obligated nearly \$1.2 billion of the \$1.35 billion Oregon lawmakers appropriated for the 2021-2023 biennium to transform the behavioral health care system. Today, every county has an organized network of providers who are working together to offer a full range of services to people with substance use problems – from harm reduction to treatment to housing.
- When the COVID-19 global pandemic came for Oregon, we took urgent, responsible, science-based public health actions that prevented more than 5,000 deaths. Oregon has held cases to the second lowest COVID-19 infection rate in the nation. Oregon's COVID-19 death rate is eighth lowest rate among all states. Oregon's COVID-19 response was ranked 5th most effective among all state by the Commonwealth Fund, a national health grant-making and research foundation.
- Oregon has one of the highest COVID-19 vaccination rates in the United States. But more importantly, Oregon has closed inequities in vaccination rates for communities that are among the most hard-hit by the COVID-19 pandemic. In Oregon, more than eight in 10 people (81 percent) in the Latino, Latina, Latinx community are vaccinated, nearly the rate of white Oregonians (82 percent). Today, 95 percent of Blacks, African Americans and African Immigrants in Oregon are vaccinated. No state in the nation has posted a higher COVID-19 vaccination rate for the Black community.

I have been honored to serve the people of Oregon through these challenging times. I have been proud to support the staff at OHA, so many of whom have spent long hours away from loved ones working to save lives and protect Oregon communities through an unrelenting series of crises.

Finally, I have been fortunate to serve a Governor who cares about health and health equity. You have made hard choices that enabled us to save thousands of people in Oregon and navigate the worst health crisis our nation has faced in more than a century. I appreciate the integrity of your leadership and all the support you've given me and the staff at OHA.

Sincerely,



Patrick M. Allen
Director