



Testimony in Support of HB 3260

April 5, 2013

Carole Most RNc, MN, WHCNP

Chairs Greenlick and members of the committee:

Thank you for accepting my written testimony on behalf of the Oregon Nurses Association (ONA) in support of HB 3260.

My name is Carole Most. I have been a nurse for over 35 years. Much of that time I have worked as a Women's Health Care Nurse Practitioner. Most of my NP career was spent at the Department of Veterans Affairs Portland Medical Center, where I was the Women Veterans Program Manager. I am mostly retired now, but for the past three years I have worked on call for the Marion County Health Department. I have been an ONA member since 1978 and I am currently the ONA liaison to the Health Care for All Oregon statewide coalition.

ONA represents over 13,000 registered nurses, advanced practice nurses, and nursing students in the state of Oregon. Not only do nurses make up the largest sector of the health care workforce, year after year nurses are voted as the profession most trusted by the American public according to the Gallup poll and their opinion is valued on providing affordable healthcare to all.

ONA joins the American Nurses Association in support of a comprehensive single payer health care system. ONA recognizes the extraordinary progress that has occurred as a result of the Affordable Care Act and Oregon's health care delivery transformation and wants to continue to build upon the progress we've made to ensure each and every Oregonian has seamless access to quality health care services. HB 3260 directs the Oregon Health Authority to conduct a study comparing four types of financial structures and report their findings back to the legislature. This will ensure the legislature will have the information necessary to determine the best next steps for Oregon's health care transformation efforts.

The US spends an average of twice as much on health care per person as other western countries and we are the only industrialized country that does not provide universal coverage. I believe that health care is a basic human right and key component of a thriving community. I also know that we must have adequate financing in order to provide health care for all.

Despite the commitment of every nurse and health care provider to provide the best possible care to every Oregonian, it's simply not possible until every Oregonian has stable, continuous health care coverage and access. Even after Oregon's Medicaid expansion occurring as a result of the Affordable Care Act, many Oregonians will not have adequate health insurance to access the services they need to stay healthy. Nurses are on the frontlines of Oregon's health care system. As such we are in a unique position in that we have first-hand knowledge of the effects of the health care crisis and the struggles uninsured Oregonians face in seeking the care they need. I'm thrilled that Oregon is on the forefront of health care transformation, but I also believe insuring *most* Oregonians is simply not good enough.

The patients I see at the Health Department are often coming because they've lost their employment and thus their health insurance. When they present with a health condition which is not a funded part of the Health Department's mission, they're only recourse is the emergency room, urgent care, or a few limited options in the community. And I know, in my nurses' heart that many of them leave and do not attempt to access care for fear of the cost and other real and perceived barriers.

ONA supports HB 3260 because Oregon's nurses want our focus to be on helping our patients get well, not on what insurance plan they have or if the care they need will be covered. HB 3260 will help Oregon determine the most effective way to finance Oregon's health care system.

Many of Oregon's nurses became nurses because they want to touch lives, they want to make a difference, and they want to help keep their fellow Oregonians healthy and happy. Today, you may well make that kind of difference for a fellow Oregonian, a neighbor, or perhaps even your own family member. By voting YES on HB 3640, you have the opportunity to help Oregon build on our transformation efforts, provide affordable health care for every Oregon resident, but most importantly, please recognize that by voting YES, you might well be saving a life.