

TESTIMONY OF NADINE GRZESKOWIAK ON HB 2922
May 13, 2013

Good Day. The year is 2013 and we live in the United States of America.

My name is Nadine Grzeskowiak. For 17 years I have been employed as an Emergency / Trauma RN and have worked in over half of the emergency departments in Oregon as an agency nurse. I currently am a very hard working owner of two nursing businesses and I cannot afford health insurance.

The story I am about to tell you is playing out as I speak.

A very nice 58 year-old gentleman presented as a patient at the Corvallis Community Outreach Medical Clinic a few weeks ago with symptoms of increasing weakness and fatigue. I happened to be the volunteer nurse that checked him into an exam room. I took his vital signs, a brief history of his symptoms and noted that he had significantly low blood pressure. He was then seen by the volunteer MD, diagnosed with a virus and sent for lab work. He was instructed by the doctor to return in two weeks for his lab results and follow-up. He did exactly what was asked of him.

He returned to the clinic two weeks later in decidedly worse shape. In fact, he was very pale and slumped over on a bench. He was unable to hold his body up. I once again checked him in, took his vital signs and again noted a significantly low blood pressure. He told me he almost passed out several times during his drive to the clinic. This gentleman was obviously extremely ill, and I requested that the supervisor call an ambulance to transport him to the emergency department. He needed a work up and treatment far beyond our capabilities at the community clinic and he needed it IMMEDIATELY, something I do not say lightly.

What ensued were long back and forth conversations about the bills he was going to incur from both the ambulance AND the emergency department. A compromise was made and a taxi was called to transport the patient to the hospital. Not an ideal situation at all for a critically ill patient. While waiting the ½ hour for the taxi to arrive, several of us kept him company and watched him closely. My main concern was that he would die waiting for that taxi. While waiting with him, I asked his permission to tell this story to whoever would listen and today, it is you.

He did make it to the hospital emergency department and had a full work up. He was diagnosed that day with esophageal cancer with metastases to his liver. Who knows if this otherwise healthy 58 year-old man could have avoided the progression of his cancer had he been lucky enough to have insurance and the ability to access quality medical care and receive a diagnosis much sooner, or even preventative health care. Desperately sick people do seek medical attention, eventually. Usually when it's too

late. This is a tragically sad commentary. When did we as a country become so morally bankrupt that we fail to take care of the sick and injured in our communities? When did we decide as a culture to put profits for the very few far above and beyond the health of our entire nation? As a nurse, I should never have to decide AGAINST what is best for my patients because they can't pay their bills. At any moment in our country in the year 2013 any of you, or your children or your neighbors could find yourselves in this same situation, with critical medical decisions being made for you based on your ability or lack of ability to pay. Yes. Single Payer Health Care for ALL. Now.