

Testimony in support of HB 2922 from Camilo Marquez, MD, Co chair of the Health Committee of Jobs with Justice, Portland Oregon, May 13, 2013.

My name is Camilo Marquez. I am a retired physician who moved to Oregon two years ago from New York. I have 30 years of experience mostly working in the public sector in municipal, state, county and non-profit clinical facilities. I have experience in both urban and rural settings and have been in private practice. Presently I reside in NE Portland and am proud to count myself as one of Michael Dembrow's constituents. It so happens that before attending medical school, I was a graduate student in economic and completed the research for a dissertation in public finance. I can speak both to the individual impact of our fragmented, non-system of health care on the individual and families (I was a child and adolescent psychiatrist) as well as the significant pressure on public finance that it imposes. Rising costs of health care affect families, workers, governments and all institutions that have a personnel budget. For families, health insecurity presents a double-whammy of anxiety about treatment for illness and accidents and the threat of financial disaster from overwhelming costs of disease. You know that most personal bankruptcies are due to medical expenses. I don't have to tell you about the pressure the costs of health care place on public budgets. Most of the controversial issues you have been dealing with in the area of finance are indirectly related to health care cost. Imagine how your lives and careers would be if you did not have to contend with these pressures. Imagine how the lives of your constituents would be without the threat of health and financial insecurity. As we have seen through the course of the Great Recession, no one is immune from the devastating impact of the loss of employment and health coverage. Communities are in turmoil as their budgets are crunched by the demands of health care coverage. Labor and business are in constant tension over these issues in their contract negotiations. In order to deal with the problems of rising costs, we see the insurance industry, health care providers and employers resorting to consolidation of their market power in order to try to dictate the terms of costs in the market place. One thing is certain in this competition for dwindling resources is that the people who need or may need care, the patients and their families come out on the short end of the stick. Higher premium costs, fewer services, reduced reimbursements and stressful employment circumstances for workers. This would all go away with the passage of the Act for an Affordable Health Care Plan for All Oregon. Everyone would be covered; no longer would people have to worry about the financial impact of health care and greatest of all for the entire community, budgets of institutions would be relieved of the pressure they face. Tuition increases in higher education would be moderate; adequate staffing of public schools would be possible; municipal budgets would not have to face the decision to cut valued programs for the sake of maintaining minimal standards of public welfare. It goes on and on. You can do this. The Act will not compromise the Oregon Health Transformation and it will fill in the massive gaps and uncertainties of Obamacare. Despite the expansion of services in Oregon through Medicaid and Cover Oregon, 200,000 people will be left without coverage resulting in a predictable 200 deaths a year for treatable causes. This is the wage on inaction on this measure. I plead with you for the sake of our communities and your constituents to support and pass this measure.

Thank you,

Camilo Marquez, MD