

## SB 631 – Written Testimony

Date: 27 April, 2015

To: Sen. Monnes Anderson and members of the Oregon Senate Health Care Committee,

From: Samuel Metz, MD

Re: **SB 631**

Sen. Monnes Anderson,

I am a private practice anesthesiologist who works and lives in Portland. I encourage committee members to support SB 631.

This bill addresses three questions: Why does Oregon need health care reform, what do we want reform to achieve, and what can successful systems teach us?

### **Why does Oregon need health care reform?**

1. All states need reform, not just Oregon. Americans pay twice as much for health care as average citizens in other industrialized countries. We are the most expensive country in the world for health care. Oregonians pay as much as other Americans in other states: too much.
2. On almost every measure of public health, the US is at or near the bottom of industrialized countries. Maternal mortality, diabetic foot amputations because of poor care, lives lost to treatable diseases because the patient could not pay for treatment – our record is the worst. Oregonians suffer as much as other Americans in other states, and this poor record despite achieving over 95% insurance coverage.
3. Only in America can a sick person go bankrupt attempting to pay for a treatable disease. Medical crises precipitate 12,000 bankruptcies in Oregon each year, affecting 35,000 Oregonians. Most families owned a health insurance policy at the time the medical crisis began.

### **What should health care reform achieve?**

Health care legislation, if it is to qualify as reform, must achieve three goals:

1. **Access** to health care when people need it, regardless of wealth, health, employment, or age.
2. **Lower costs.** Oregonians pay for health care three ways: premiums, out of pocket payments, and taxes to support government programs. Decreasing one but increasing another shifts costs, but does not reduce them.
3. **Better public health.**

Simply stated, health care reform is ***better care to more people for less money.***

The Affordable Care Act was intended to provide more Americans with insurance policies. It was not intended to produce universal access to health care when needed nor to reduce costs. It was hoped that increasing the sales of private insurance would improve public health, but that has not happened.

The lesson of the ACA is that insurance coverage and health care access are independent goals. Oregonians need health care access, not more insurance.

Oregon still needs health care reform.

### **How do successful health care systems provide better care to more people for less money?**

Every other industrialized nation provides better care to more people for less money than we spend in Oregon and the US. They are surprisingly different from our country and from each other, but they have one characteristic in common.

Successful systems begin with universal care.

No health care system has succeeded in providing better care to more people for less money without first establishing universal care. Better health and lower costs inevitably follow.

### **Conclusion**

SB 631 provides the first critical step toward health care reform in Oregon. It establishes universal access to health care. Every health care system that provides universal care, as SB 631 will achieve, enjoys better health at lower cost. Every academic study of universal care in the US, both on a statewide and national level, predicts a similar outcome: better health, lower costs.

I urge members of the Senate Health Care Committee to support SB 631 and recognize its ability to provide Oregonians with better care at lower cost for less money.

Thank you.

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