



## **Written testimony to The Senate Committee on Health Care in support of SB 631**

Chair Laurie Monnes Anderson, Vice-Chair Jeff Kruse, members Tim Knopp, Chip Shields and Elizabeth Steiner-Hayward.

My name is Dr. Andy Harris, and I am writing as a physician and board member of the Oregon Center for Christian Voices (OCCV). Since its inception, OCCV has advocated for an effective, affordable health care system.

All of the major Christian and Jewish denominations have called for universal health-care that is affordable, effective, efficient and accessible to everyone living in the United States.[i] OCCV is calling for such a system in Oregon and is urging you to support SB 631. We believe that it is unconscionable that people die prematurely and suffer needlessly in the richest country in the world. Oregon can and must do better.

The United States health care system is less effective than many developed countries. The World Health Organization ranks our health care system 37<sup>th</sup> in the world. The U.S. ranks from 27<sup>th</sup> to 47<sup>th</sup> in the world in life longevity. We rank poorly on measures of fairness and avoidable mortality. We find it morally indefensible that diabetes patients will have amputations at twice the rate as patients living in European countries and that infants in the United States die at two times the rate of infants in Sweden.[ii]

Our healthcare system is a burden on our economy, medical professionals, and patients and their families:

1. The United States spends approximately 17 per cent of GDP per year—\$8,000 per person—whereas European countries, Canada and Taiwan spend less than 13 per cent of GDP --under \$5,000 per year—on healthcare.[iii]
2. Medical providers are burdened by a myriad of insurance policies and needless paperwork. For example, Professor Gerald Friedman in his 2014 speaking tour of Oregon stated that Massachusetts General Hospital has over two-hundred (200) staff working on reimbursement issues whereas a comparable hospital in Toronto Canada has two (2) people working on the same issues. As a practicing physician, I can attest to the burden of dealing with a multitude of insurance companies, each with their unique insurance claim forms.
3. Finally, the bankruptcy rate in the United States due to healthcare bills is scandalous. Along with potential financial ruin, our system with its pre-authorizations, exclusions, waiting periods, etc., is so complex, confusing and discriminatory that it results in untold stress to patients. As you know stress causes poor health and impedes recovery from illness.

In summary, the healthcare system in Oregon is so flawed morally and practically, that a major change is required. While the Affordable Care Act has provided many improvements to our current healthcare system, this healthcare system is a flawed system built on profits rather than the well-being of people.

Oregon Center for Christian Voices asks you to support the passage of SB 631.



Thank you very much.

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[i] Hanna Walling, Linda, Kenneth B Frist, & Marie Frisof, Seeking Justice in Healthcare, A Guide For Advocates in Faith Communities. Faithful Reform in Healthcare. Wilson, NC, 2011.

[ii] T. R. Reid, The Healing of America, The Penquin Group, NY, NY 2009

iii Tsung-Mei Chung, Congressional Testimony, March 2014