



To	Chair Monnes Anderson and Members of the Senate Committee on Health Care
From	Tricia Tillman, Public Health Director Multnomah County Health Department
Date	May 5, 2015
Subject	House Bill 3517 Testimony

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 3517. This bill will authorize the Oregon Health Authority to provide medical assistance within available funds to low-income children residing in Oregon.

Multnomah County Health Department serves many low-income families and communities of color. We serve 72,000 low-income Oregonians in our medical and dental clinics, and about 85% of those families are at or below the Federal Poverty Level. We serve about 30,000 children each year, many of whom are uninsured. We see that our community faces many health and social disparities, and HB 3517 offers an opportunity to address these disparities.

All children deserve an equal opportunity to live a healthy, productive life. But limited access to health care and social and economic opportunities create a lifelong pathway to negative health outcomes and greater health disparities. Low-income youth face a high prevalence of risk factors for cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and other chronic diseases. Currently there are exclusions that some low-income children face when needing to access medical assistance.

HB 3517 will fix Oregon's statutes for children to access medical assistance and provide an opportunity to protect the health of one of our most vulnerable populations. Research by Cornell University and Harvard University found that when low-income children get access to Medicaid coverage, they see declines in high school dropout rates, and improvements in college attendance and college completion. Indeed, when children are healthy, they are able to focus in school and contribute to making a difference in their community.

The conditions under which people live, learn, work and play affect the health of our vulnerable communities. Eliminating barriers for children to qualify for medical assistance programs, such as through the Health Care for All Oregon Children program, will provide an opportunity to improve the health of all of Oregon's communities. HB 3517 is a wise investment for Oregon and protecting the health of all children. Our children are our future workforce and leaders, and HB 3517 can help them to realize their opportunities and potential. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB 3517.

If you have additional questions, please contact Sami Jarrah, Deputy Director for Integrated Clinical Services, at 503-988-4826 or sami.jarrah@multco.us.