

To: Senate Committee on Health Care
From: Nicoletta McKee
Date: May 18, 2015
Re: Testimony in Support of HB 2758

Chair Monnes Anderson and Members of the Senate Health Care Committee:

My name is Nicolette McKee and I am here to speak in support of HB 2758. As the Call Center Manager for Planned Parenthood Columbia Willamette, I oversee a staff that fields an average of 600 calls every day from patients across Oregon and Southwest Washington. These patients are relying on us to provide them with accurate information and nonjudgmental counseling – but more than anything, people of all ages come to us because they know they will be cared for compassionately and confidentially.

Planned Parenthood Columbia Willamette replaces fear with facts, and misinformation with education. We are here to protect public health by preventing unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases. We are here to provide lifesaving cancer screenings for women with nowhere else to turn. We are here for teens who don't know how to talk to their parents about sexual health.

The Affordable Care Act has achieved great strides in making health insurance more affordable for thousands of Oregonians who are uninsured, particularly for those younger than 26 who can stay on their parents' health insurance plan. However, this has increased concerns about the major loophole in privacy when it comes to insurance communications. If people are afraid of using their health insurance because their confidentiality will be violated, they are effectively uninsured.

We regularly receive calls from patients who don't feel like they can access health care because a parent or a partner will receive information about their visit. Patients are forced to make health care decisions based on their concerns about confidentiality instead of based on their real medical needs. If their coverage doesn't protect their privacy in insurance communications, they might as well be uninsured.

The Call Center recently received a call from a 16-year-old who needed treatment for the removal of genital warts. Even though she had private insurance through her parents, she didn't even consider it as an option, for fear that they would find out. Instead, she was desperately trying to scrape together the money to pay for her healthcare services out of her own pocket. This is unacceptable.

We also hear from survivors of domestic violence who need to gain access to birth control or STD testing while escaping from an unsafe situation at home. At such a vulnerable time, the last thing they need to worry about is the danger of their partner discovering when and where they are seeking healthcare services.

Please support House Bill 2758 to protect the privacy of patients in their insurance communications. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Nicoletta McKee
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