

Testimony in Support of HB 4017-2 Amendment

Janet Bauer, Policy Analyst, Before the House Health Care Committee

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Good afternoon, Chair Greenlick, Vice Chairs Hayden and Nosse, and members of the committee. My name is Janet Bauer. I am a policy analyst with the Oregon Center for Public Policy. OCPP is a part of the Inclusion, Affordability and Innovation Coalition, which supports consideration of a Basic Health Program in Oregon.

The HB 4017-2 amendment is the right next step to determine the best way to address the fact that, despite the progress our state has made, too many Oregonians still lack health insurance. As I know you are aware, low-income workers are having the most trouble affording the available health insurance. And even if they do purchase coverage, these cash-strapped individuals are the most likely to go without treatment when they are sick because they can't afford the charges.

Most are U.S. citizens. Some are legal permanent residents barred from Medicaid, and Pacific-islanders residing under the Compact of Free Association agreement.

This committee has long recognized that health reform in Oregon is not done. And for a number of years, you have taken steps to address problematic gaps in coverage. You've recognized that Basic Health is a potential solution, commissioning a feasibility study of the program in 2014. Those results being promising, in 2015 you tasked stakeholders with recommending how a program could be structured.

Now with HB 4017-2, you will continue moving forward. As I promised last month, we worked with the Oregon Department of Consumer and Business Services and easily agreed on amendment language.

The -2 amendment directs stakeholders to create a blueprint for a Basic Health Program that best addresses the coverage gaps. It requires them to consider the recommendations of a recent workgroup but leaves flexibility to create the strongest, most feasible program.

The -2 requires an updated actuarial analysis to inform the work.

The -2 leaves open the possibility that a Waiver for State Innovation, an option that Oregon Senator Ron Wyden included in the ACA, would be a good fit.

HB 4017 with -2 amendment is the right next step on behalf of Oregonians who aren't getting the care they need. For their sake, I urge you to approve it without delay.