

February 5, 2016

Representative Mitch Greenlick, Chair
House Committee on Health Care
Oregon Legislative Assembly

Re: HB 4017

Chair Greenlick and Members of the Committee:

OSPIRG supports HB 4017. This legislation represents the next step in an important dialog about the future of health care access and financing in Oregon.

OSPIRG does not have a position on the merits of implementing the Affordable Care Act's Basic Health Plan option in Oregon at this time because the consumer interest in implementing this program depends critically on details that have yet to be determined. HB 4017 will help Oregon determine those details and enable an informed decision about implementation in the 2017 Legislative Session.

HB 4017 will also facilitate an exploration of the Affordable Care Act's State Innovation Waiver process, which represents an opportunity to explore not only new coverage programs like Basic Health but other initiatives that could improve health insurance affordability, stimulate innovation and provide coverage to more Oregonians. It is possible that a program like the Basic Health Plan could be significantly strengthened by a waiver, which could provide more flexibility to implement the program in a way that meets Oregon's unique needs.

The waiver discussion also provides an opportunity to evaluate potential solutions to widely recognized shortcomings of our current system such as the so-called "family glitch," which blocks many Oregonians from accessing tax credits to lower their premium costs even though the coverage available to them through a spouse or parent's employer is not affordable for them. The waiver discussion may also open the door to a range of other innovative policy options that could support Oregon's health system transformation efforts and the Triple Aim, such as the promotion of benefit designs that support high-value care delivery.

HB 4017 will enable important discussions about a range of policy options well worth exploring, and will help inform critical decisions about the future of health care in our state, and we urge your support.

Thank you for your consideration.

Jesse Ellis O'Brien
OSPIRG Policy Director