



Joint Committee on
Jen Barr, DNP, FNP-C, RN

Referendum 301

September 14, 2017

Co-Chairs Rayfield and Devlin and members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit public comment on the title and explanatory statement of Referendum 301 to uphold the Oregon Healthcare Protections Bill.

As a health care provider, it's critical that my patients be able to access world-class preventative care for their physical, mental and behavioral health and I have felt lucky to live in a state where we have proactively expanded access to care. However, if Referendum 301 makes it to the ballot and fails, it would devastate many of my patients.

As a health care provider at a large metro-area children's hospital, the majority of my patients are covered through Medicaid and the majority require surgery, some needing multiple surgeries and interventions across their life-span. I cannot image what the burden of cost would be for families if they lost coverage. So many parents are already under severe emotional strain and make significant sacrifices for the life-saving treatment for their sick child – it's unconscionable that we would consider adding financial strain to their experience and the experience of so many other Oregonians.

As a provider, I obviously understand the clear human impact that the measure would have. Unfortunately, that human impact is not reflected in the current ballot title and explanatory statement of Referendum 301.

If the referendum fails, millions of dollars in state funds and billions in federal funds will be slashed from the state budget. Although certain people are protected under federal law, the legislature will more than likely have to make painful decisions on who will lose access to care, and will likely jeopardize coverage for the 375,000 Oregonians who are covered through the Oregon Health Plan thanks to expanded Medicaid in the Affordable Care Act. Further, the provider tax stabilizes the private market and lowers premiums for more than 200,000 Oregonians. Without this program, Oregonians – particularly in rural parts of the state -- are likely to have far fewer insurance options and an uncompetitive, expensive insurance market.

With the numerical realities and system impacts so stark in Referendum 301, it's important that every voter in the state understand the true impact in relatable and understandable terms. Many Oregonians only read the title of a measure before voting, so it's imperative that the title explicitly lists how many Oregonians are at risk of losing their health care and how much their premiums could increase if they vote no.

With so much at stake if this measure makes it to the ballot, it's vital that voters have a crystal clear understanding of the potential ramifications associated with the measure. As a health care professional, I understand the human impact of what's at stake with Referendum 301. It's only fair that every voter in Oregon also have that same opportunity.