



FAMILY FORWARD OREGON

Smart policies for today's families.

Date: September 14, 2017
To: Co-Chairs Devlin and Rayfield and the Joint Committee on Referendum 301
From: Kate Newhall, Family Forward
Re: Proposed Ballot Title language for Referendum 301

Thank you for the opportunity to offer comments on the recently proposed ballot title for Referendum 301 and referral of the provider assessment passed by the 2017 legislature.

As an organization, Family Forward works to ensure that all Oregonians, and their families, are able to work and thrive; we advocate for policies that support gender and racial justice and envision an Oregon where all working families are economically secure. We believe access to affordable health care is one of the most fundamental economic justice and equity issues and that no family should be without. We also believe that Oregon voters will be faced with a complex decision in the referral of HB 2391, and they should have all the information they need on the impact that such a measure will have on themselves and their communities. They should be made privy to the actual human impacts and provided with quantifiable information about exactly how many Oregonians stand to lose their health care coverage if the repeal is successful.

As you are well aware, the increased provider assessment passed this year enabled Oregon to protect the health care of 375,000 low-income individuals who depend on the Oregon Health Plan for their healthcare needs. The \$653 million that will be raised from the provider assessment also leverages an impressive \$1.86 million in federal matching funds, which are critical to serving this expansion population. In addition, if HB 2391 is repealed by voters, individuals who purchase insurance individually are expected to see an increase in premiums. As drafted, the ballot title leaves the impression that private market premiums will increase only if the assessment is retained; this is misleading as private market premiums may actually increase more than 1.5 percent if the assessment is repealed.

As Oregon voters are being asked to weigh in on this referendum, they deserve to know what the impacts of this decision will mean, including how it will Oregonians and their families and increase overall premiums. These very real impacts should be quantified for Oregon voters in a reasonable and clear way in the ballot title.