



### **Joint Committee on Referendum 301**

Allison Seymour, RN

September 14, 2017

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

Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony regarding Referendum 301. My name is Allison Seymour and I am a registered nurse providing medical telemetry care at Salem Health. I am submitting testimony on behalf of the Oregon Nurses Association representing over 15,000 members registered nurses working throughout our state's health care system.

As a nurse, I have a duty to the community and the patients of which I serve, which is why I was a staunch advocate for the Oregon Health Care Protections bill last legislative session to prevent the loss of insurance for 375,000 Oregonians. In this process, I witnessed hours of heart wrenching testimony from patients, family members and care providers pleading to keep Oregonians insured and programs funded.

During my professional practice I have seen better outcomes for patients who have insurance and access to a primary care provider. When a patient has the ability to manage their chronic illness prior to admission, their morbidity and length of stay is less than a patient without the same resources.

I have seen the detrimental effects of financial anxiety and stress on patient health and ability to cope with their illness. I recently took care of a man impacted by deep depression due to the hopelessness of his financial situation since he didn't have health insurance. It pains me to sit at the bedside of a patient so overwhelmed with financial strain that he cannot focus on his health and healing.

Since the Affordable Care Act passed, hospitals and other members of the healthcare community have profited. Providers serving patients on the Oregon Health Plan do not want to see patients do not lose access to life-saving care. That is why House Bill 2391 received the support of hospitals, Coordinated Care Organizations and insurers.

In light of this, it would be misleading to voters if the ballot title and summary did not include the impact that the referendum will have on patients. They need to know that their coverage is in financial peril and they need to know how many Oregonians would be at risk of losing coverage to make a fully informed decision. This should be done by listing the concrete numbers of what's at stake with Referendum 301: 375,000 Oregonians losing OHP coverage and 220,000 more potentially seeing their premiums increase.

Not including this information would be like asking a patient if they agree to take a blood pressure medication without disclosing the potential side effects. This is ethically wrong and not a practice Oregon should condone or adopt. Voters deserve to know that Oregonians are at risk of losing their healthcare and paying higher premiums if Referendum 301 makes it to the ballot and fails. Please change the draft title and explanatory statement to adequately reflect the ramifications of repealing this measure.