

Testimony in favor of HB 2115

March 6, 2017

Chair Barnhart, members of the committee. I am Michael Huntington, retired physician from Corvallis, Oregon and I represent Health Care for All Oregon (hcao.org) and Mid-Valley Health Care Advocates (mvhca.org).

I am testifying in favor of HB 2115.

According to the Hilltop Institute*, Oregon is one of only 15 states that does not have an explicit requirement for hospitals to report or meet a standard for community benefit programs. We think HB 2115 will help the legislature and the public ensure that public money is used wisely to address health care needs in our communities.

Many Oregon hospitals, including Good Samaritan Regional Medical Center in Corvallis, do have community benefit programs and spend considerable effort choosing projects to support. But since they are managing taxpayers' money as a fiduciary agent for the federal and state governments, hospitals are rightly directed by this bill to follow strict standards for the allotment and use of that money.

We have offered additional proposals that you may have in front of you now to further define how the use of community benefit money might best be planned and how the public can most easily observe and influence the planning. I can confirm for you that even though our hospital does have an extensive community benefit program, it does not declare a standard percentage of its income to be used as community benefit and definitely does not make it easy for the public to observe and participate in the decisions about community benefit. This is a very opaque process. We endorse the reporting requirements listed in HB 2115 and the requirement that a defined percentage (5%) of gross receipts are to be used for community benefit.

We think this legislation will make it easier to find out how much money (our tax money) is available in hospital community benefit funds and how hospitals prioritize and allocate money for public health, including the kind of emergencies Dr. Thomson will mention, and to improve the social determinants of health. We think passage of HB 2115 and our additional proposals will help our communities... and the state budget.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. I would be happy to answer any questions.

* The Hilltop Institute at University of Maryland, Baltimore county is a non-partisan health research organization—with an expertise in Medicaid and in improving publicly financed health care systems—dedicated to advancing the health and wellbeing of vulnerable populations. Hilltop conducts research, analysis, and evaluations on behalf of government agencies, foundations, and nonprofit organizations at the national, state, and local levels. Hilltop is committed to addressing complex issues through informed, objective, and innovative research and analysis. (goo.gl/eUpNqr)