



**Joint Subcommittee on Human Services
Testimony on the Public Health Budget**

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March 8, 2017

Co-Chairs Steiner Hayward and Rayfield and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. My name is Teri Mills and I am long time nurse educator teaching at Portland Community College (PCC). I also serve on the Oregon Nurses Association's Cabinet on Health Policy.

The budget deficit we face is alarming. Our state is experiencing a serious funding shortfall, largely as the result of an insufficient tax structure. You, our elected officials are faced with an important choice: kick hundreds of thousands of Oregonians off of their health insurance and endanger numerous vital nurse-led public health programs or ask corporations and hospitals to start paying their fair share.

Oregon's school based health centers are just one example of nurse-led public health programs at risk for losing state dollars that could result in their closure or need to cut back vital services. These clinics provide quality, affordable, cost-effective health care to young people and help keep kids healthier, in school, and ready to learn. Not only do these nurses provide emergent care, but they also provide health teaching and counseling. In a 2012-2013 SBHC youth survey, 77 percent of those served reported discussing at least one preventive health topic during their health center visit. Number one on this list was healthy body weight and eating. Oregon now has the 22nd highest adult obesity rate in the nation, according to *The State of Obesity: Better Policies for a Healthier America* released September 2016. By focusing on prevention and early intervention, costly health conditions, such as diabetes, are avoided and this will save healthcare dollars in the future.

Today, our state's hospitals have 50 billion dollars in reserves, and 70% of those profits are the direct result of Medicaid reimbursements. Hospitals that serve patients on the Oregon Health Plan have a critical obligation to ensure that our children and their families do not lose access to quality and affordable care. Today I am asking you to make a choice that will continue to provide funding for services that Oregonians depend upon.