

Dear Chair Greenlick and Members of the House Committee on Health Care,

My name is Marie LeJeune and I am a Professor of Teacher Education at Western Oregon University where I have worked since 2007.

I'm writing to express my deep concerns about House Bill 3428.

I urge you to oppose this bill that I believe will not only have a dramatic effect on health care options, but will also have a significant effect on the recruitment and retention of quality educators in Oregon.

It is my understanding that if HB 3428 passes, the majority of public employees in Oregon would be enrolled in coordinated care organizations (CCOs) that contract with the Oregon Health Authority, the agency responsible for administering Medicaid through CCOs in Oregon through the Oregon Health Plan (OHP). This will greatly limit and weaken health care options for educators and for many other public servants in the state of Oregon.

When I came to Oregon in 2007, I decided to take a job at Western Oregon University rather than at a private university due to the fact that even though salaries at public universities in Oregon are very low, the benefits package made the job appealing for my family stability. I am raising my family in the small town of Monmouth, Oregon where Western Oregon University is situated. Having access to quality healthcare and choices in our healthcare has been essential to our family. I am deeply afraid that a CCO plan would mean we would not have access to healthcare options in our town. My husband is a lymphoma survivor and was treated under our Providence plan; I have continued to work at the state university despite offers for better pay due to my desire to have access to quality medical care that my employment with the state has previously guaranteed. Having quality medical care is one of my highest priorities, even more so than my own salary. Without access to this type of quality healthcare I would need to seriously reconsider my commitment to working for the state. I know I'm not the only employee in this situation. As Oregon faces a huge teaching shortage and needs qualified educators, I think the impact of this bill would affect our ability to hire and retain quality educators in the state.

Additionally, my colleagues and I often have to travel out of the local area, out of the state and even sometimes internationally as a condition of our employment and our continuation on tenure and promotion pathways. Without quality healthcare that crosses state lines, how will we avail ourselves of necessary medical care?

When we attempt to hire new faculty at WOU, we often lose out to other state institutions and private colleges, primarily because our salaries are lower than many other places. However, when we do secure quality colleagues, they are often faculty with families who value having quality benefits and strong medical insurance. I fear that we will continue to struggle to bring quality educators to Oregon without providing high quality benefits to these employees.

Please oppose HB 3428. This bill will have negative ramifications for many in Oregon and may force high quality employees and educators to leave the state or to not consider employment here.

Respectfully yours,

Marie A. LeJeune

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Marie A. LeJeune, Ph.D.

*Associate Professor*

*Coordinator, Undergraduate and Post-baccalaureate Teacher Education Program*

Western Oregon University

345 N. Monmouth Ave

Monmouth, OR 97361

503-838-8450