

Testimony in support of SB 1046

The Health Care for All Oregon Plan

Senate Healthcare Committee

April 20, 2017

Submitted by Dr. Charlie Swanson

Thank you, Chair Monnes Anderson, vice chair Kruse, and members of the committee. I am Charlie Swanson, a health care and democracy advocate testifying in support of SB 1046.

There is a joke about publicly funded universal health care. A recently deceased advocate, upon being admitted into heaven, was permitted to ask a question of the Almighty. "Will the United States ever have universal health care?" he asked. "Oh Yes," God replied, "but not in my lifetime." Those of us in Health Care for All Oregon are working to make it happen sooner, beginning by getting a system functioning in Oregon.

We think health care should be treated as a public good, provided as needed to those in Oregon, in a manner similar to public education, public roads, police protection, and fire protection. Not only is this a good moral choice, it is a good economic choice. The administrative simplification that a single payer model provides can lead to everyone being provided necessary services with lower expenditures than our current system, even as it provides better care to more people.

Health care is not a normal market commodity. When you are having a heart attack, or as you are lying unconscious in your car after an accident, you cannot shop around. There is substantial information asymmetry – few patients have as much knowledge as their providers. Health insurers, as third party payers, cannot lead us to an affordable market solution.

Even the famed conservative economist Friedrich Hayek recognized this. In *The Road to Serfdom*, Hayek writes: "...Where, as in the case of sickness and accident, neither the desire to avoid such calamities nor the efforts to overcome their consequences are as a rule weakened by the provision of assistance – where, in short, we deal with genuinely insurable risks – the case for the state's helping to organize a comprehensive system of social insurance is very strong."

Oregon should take the next step towards universal healthcare after the RAND study on health care financing. We should work together to create a plan to put before Oregon voters, a publicly funded plan based on a single payer model, with a single risk pool, including all Oregon providers in a single network. Healthcare will continue to grow more unaffordable until we do.