

May 4, 2017  
Representative Jennifer Williamson, Chair  
House Committee on Rules  
Oregon State Legislature

Re: HB 2342

Chair Williamson and Members of the Committee:

OSPIRG supports HB 2342 with the -2 amendments. This legislation will provide necessary tools for Oregon insurance regulators and the Oregon Health Insurance Marketplace to respond quickly to protect consumers and preserve a competitive market for health coverage in the event of disruptive federal legislative or administrative action. Although we hope the powers outlined in this legislation will never need to be used, this bill is a prudent step to ensure the state has the tools it needs to respond to a crisis.

Oregon's health insurance markets and the consumers who rely on them are facing unprecedented uncertainty. OSPIRG and our members across the state are deeply concerned about the potential impact of the American Health Care Act, currently being debated in Congress. Not only would this legislation lead to loss of health coverage for hundreds of thousands of Oregonians—it also risks sparking chaos in health insurance markets that could drive up costs and degrade quality of care for many more. At the same time, unresolved threats to the Affordable Care Act's critical cost-sharing reduction program and other potential legislative and administrative changes risk further disruption and even higher costs.

HB 2342 cannot by itself protect Oregon consumers from all of the potential fallout of misguided federal action, but it will help address the possibility that major changes may happen after health insurance rates and plans have already been approved for the next year. Without this legislation, regulators would be locked into those approvals and would not be able to act to preserve access to affordable health coverage for as many Oregonians as possible, and to ensure that competitive health insurance markets could survive in the new environment.

HB 2342 conveys extraordinary, though time-limited, powers to the Department of Consumer and Business Services. But it also establishes a robust and transparent process by requiring direction from the Health Insurance Marketplace Advisory Committee. As Vice-Chair of this multi-stakeholder body, I commit to working to create a robust public process to inform any use of this legislation that may prove necessary.

Thank you for your consideration.

Jesse Ellis O'Brien, OSPIRG Policy Director