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Senate Health Care Committee

HB 2838 A

May 11, 2017

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Madam Chair, members of the Senate Health Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB 2838, concerning application assisters.

The mission of the Oregon Law Center (OLC) is to “achieve justice for the low-income communities of Oregon by providing a full range of the highest quality civil legal services.” OLC has been engaged in working with the legislature, state agencies, and community allies over the years on the Oregon Health Plan, Medicaid expansion, and Healthcare Transformation, in keeping with our mission.

While our state had technology problems with Cover Oregon, it is worth noting that it was old school person-to-person engagement that resulted in enrollment success. This work was the effort of Oregon Health Authority staff, insurance agents, and community assisters. As we all know, enrollment in the Oregon Health plan and In Qualified Health Plans is complex.

I am especially interested in the work of those assisters in community based organizations. This local and targeted approach helps to ensure that hard to reach populations, such as communities of color, those with language barriers, those with disabling conditions, and others who may be disenfranchised, are served in a way that is respectful and empowering, while working toward the desired outcomes of enrollment and retention.

One difficulty that has been experienced over the years is the sometimes erratic funding of community based organizations that have done this work. I believe it

is important that reliable and focused funding be made available to assist new enrollees, as well as those who are renewing their coverage. This desired result is a bit uncertain with the funding mechanism in the amended bill, as the revenue is based on voluntary contributions from Coordinated Care Organizations (CCOs). However, we can support this concept as a good step forward.

The engrossed bill also adds requirements for OHA to provide updated information to CCOs about membership data, as well as training for those in CCOs who will update the database. This is particularly important with respect to renewals and termination.

In closing, I would just note that we urge an aye vote on HB 2838 A, and a “do pass” to the Senate floor.

Thank you for your consideration