



To: Sen. Beyer and members of the Senate Business and Transportation Committee

From: Martin Taylor, Executive Director of Public Affairs

Date: May 30, 2017

Re: Improve Access to the Lifeline Phone Program. Support for HB 3268!

CareOregon would like to provide the following testimony and in doing so acknowledge our membership who requested this bill, the coalition that supported it and the PUC for their patience with us on the journey to crafting this legislation.

In the seven years that CareOregon has had members involved in advisory committees and CACs **this is the first session these member led groups initiated legislation.** To my knowledge this is the first time any CCO's CAC have initiated legislation. It is a significant development that CCOs can become the actual voice and agent for these members in the legislative arena.

CareOregon's members indicated that their greatest need was more ability to navigate to the services they needed and support in enrollment and/or working with the agencies. HB 3268 was to improve access to the lifeline phone program and HB 3268 was to improve enrollment assistance in OHP. In the house hearing many CareOregon members came to testify in favor of these bills.

Many local community partners came out in support of our members. We had supportive testimony and lobbying from advocates for housing, consumer advocates, legal aide, public health, safety net clinics, CCOs and culturally specific groups. What we learned was when our members have a lead advocate for their needs the community rallies to their efforts. This bill would not have been possible if it were not for this larger community of support.

Finally, **the Public Utilities Commission had an important role to play in finding the correct legislative step** to take to address this bill. When a health plan and its members step into new complex policy space they don't always have all the best information. We identified the right problem but getting to the correct solution took patience and an executive staff hosted workgroup. Where this legislation started as adversarial the hard work and commitment of everyone involved including the PUC helped us arrive at a bill we all believe will serve the needs of the population that needs the lifeline phone services.