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Oregon State House Committee on Health Care
Via e-mail to: hhc.exhibits@oregonlegislature.gov

February 5, 2018

Chair Greenlick, Vice Chairs Hayden and Nosse, and Distinguished Members of the House Committee on Health Care:

I write today on behalf of the Lane County Medical Society in support of House Joint Resolution 203. Perhaps it will come as no surprise that a group of physicians believes that health care is a human right, but their reasoning is compelling. They acknowledge that merely stating that it is a right will not automatically provide care, and that their economic interests may be at stake with the expansion of government-funded health care. Similarly, they realize that the only group currently constitutionally required to have health care provided, prisoners, often do not receive the highest standard of care. Nevertheless, they believe that our common humanity compels an acknowledgement of health care as a human right as an essential foundation for building health care for all in the future.

I find the history of the international right to health care instructive. The International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (UNSCR) provides “the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health.” The US has signed, but not ratified, this compact. Like our Oregon right to adequate educational funding, the right to health care under UNSCR is not absolute, but rather subject to “progressive realization.” While the jaded may scoff at this caveat, those words matter, having been successfully used to require governments to plan for and make progress towards the rights guaranteed under UNSCR. The right to health care will not be self-implementing, but it will serve as an important moral and legal requirement of progress towards health care for all.

While we cannot see the end of the road, we should not be afraid to take the first steps on the path. HJR 203 provides an important legal and moral foundation for the future. I urge you to support it and to allow the people of Oregon to take another step towards a more caring tomorrow.

Sincerely,



Marshall L. Wilde
Executive Director