

February 15th, 2018

Oregon State Legislature  
Senate Committee on Health Care  
900 Court St. NE | Salem, OR 97301

Re: Multnomah County Support of HJR 203

Chair Monnes Anderson and Members of the Senate Committee on Health Care:

The Multnomah County Board of Commissioners unanimously adopted a resolution in support of universal access to health care. We heard from providers, community members and from one another about the critical importance of meaningful access to health care. We ask you to support House Joint Resolution 203, proposing an amendment to Oregon's Constitution to recognize health care as a fundamental right.


In Multnomah County, our clinics provide access to quality, affordable health care for thousands of people at seven primary care clinic sites, six dental sites, seven pharmacy sites, one HIV health services center, and 12 Student Health Centers in schools across the County. In 2016, Multnomah County provided medical or dental care to 70,000 of the County's most vulnerable residents. Nearly half of our patients indicate that they are best served in a language other than English, and county health centers serve clients speaking over 100 different languages. Despite recent expansions in health care coverage, 16% of patients still enter Multnomah County's health clinics uninsured. Every day we make access to care a reality for people, whether they have insurance or not.

Over the past several years, the Legislature has taken steps toward studying and recommending the best options for financing true universal health care with a stable financial foundation for its delivery. And the Legislature continues to make progress toward equitable universal access – passage of Cover All Kids and the Reproductive Health Equity Act in 2017 demonstrate that commitment. We are heartened to see our legislative leaders prioritize equitable, universal access year after year, and applaud this continued work.

Multnomah County believes that no one should have to choose between paying their rent and getting the care they need when they are sick. Access to preventive care is more cost-effective than expensive emergency care. We all benefit when *everyone* has access to health care. Health care shouldn't be a privilege only available to some. We believe that these values are jointly held by communities across the state, and we encourage you to pass HJR 203 as a reflection of this shared commitment to accessible and affordable health care.



Deborah Kafoury  
Chair, Multnomah County



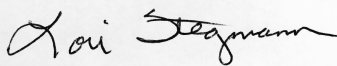
Sharon Meieran  
Commissioner District 1, Multnomah County



Loretta Smith  
Commissioner District 2, Multnomah County



Jessica Vega Pederson  
Commissioner District 3, Multnomah County



Lori Stegmann  
Commissioner District 4, Multnomah County