



**Senate Committee on Health Care
Testimony in Support of HJR 203**

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Chair Monnes Anderson and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony in support of House Joint Resolution 203, the HOPE Amendment on behalf of the Oregon Nurses Association. My name is Lillian Nickerson and I am a registered nurse at OHSU where I work in adult medicine where I serve many patients who are on the Oregon Health Plan or subsidized health care, often with multiple chronic diagnoses generally associated with poverty.

I support HJR 203 because everyday in the hospital I see first-hand that the foundation to building healthy communities is access to preventative care. In my work I too often see life-altering complications from preventable illnesses such as diabetes and heart disease because my patients were unable to access care soon enough — either from lack of health insurance or because services are prohibitively expensive. This late-course treatment has disastrous effects on our community's overall health with too many Oregonians experiencing pre-mature death or utilizing the health care system in middle age at significantly higher rates and costs.

The HOPE amendment works to address these issues by ensuring that all Oregonians can access affordable health care. Oregonians have been clear: we hold a shared belief that all Oregonians deserve health care, regardless of their situation or location. From cradle to grave, Oregon should insist that we are serving our residents with the highest quality care, including physical and mental health services.

Having worked with children suffering from mental illness, I know that when access to mental health services are limited for these kids, their trauma is furthered and their prognoses become more dire. Early intervention in these cases goes hand in hand with preventing homelessness and combating our state's mental health and addiction crises. These children deserve a chance to be happy, healthy, productive members of society, despite the price tag of a prescription or the availability of an appointment or procedure. I know that too many people and too many parents have to consider whether or not they can afford to get care even in crisis. As a nurse, I have good health insurance, and I still have that fear. That's unacceptable.

None of us should live in fear that our health care will be gone tomorrow or that we will be priced out of affording the care we need. HOPE affirms in our state constitution what Oregonians have said time and again: health care is a right. And it allows some of the brightest minds in health care to come together to find solutions so that 100% of Oregonians can access, afford and utilize comprehensive health care.

As a progressive, compassionate state, we should be working towards making people healthier. HOPE fortifies that value in Oregon, which is why I hope you'll support HJR 203.