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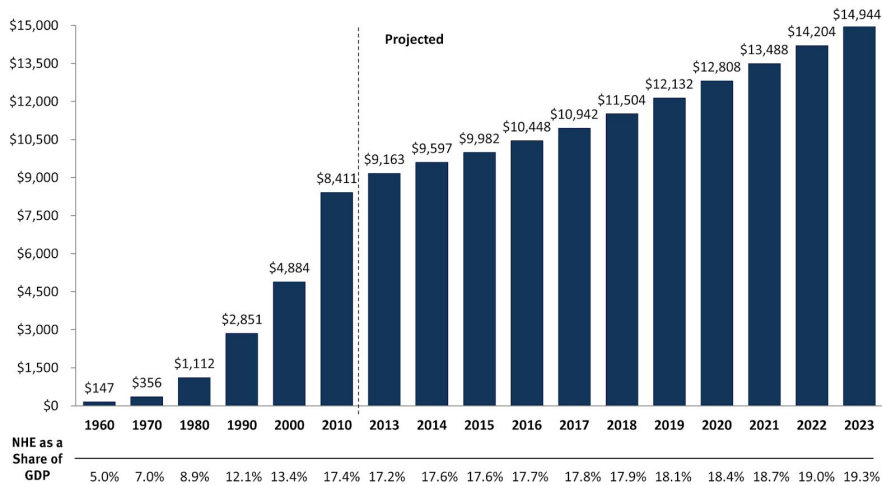
ATTN: Senate Committee on Health Care

Chair Monnes Anderson & members of the committee,

My name is Sal Peralta. I am Secretary of the Independent Party of Oregon. I am testifying today on behalf of the Independent Party of Oregon. Our party supports the notion that health care should be considered a “right” and offers the attached policy backgrounder in support of that concept. We urge legislators to continue taking steps to maintain and improve upon Oregon’s current 93 percent rate of coverage.

For nearly 60 years, the inflationary costs of health care have risen at more than 1.5 times the rate of overall inflation.<sup>1</sup> From 1960 to 2015, health care expenditures have increased from 5 percent of GDP to 17.8 percent of GDP.<sup>2</sup> Health care now accounts for approximately 19 percent our nation’s Gross Domestic Product.<sup>3</sup>

### National Health Expenditures per Capita, 1960-2023



NOTE: According to CMS, population is the U.S. Bureau of the Census resident-based population, less armed forces overseas and their dependents.

SOURCE: Kaiser Family Foundation calculations using NHE data from Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, Office of the Actuary, National Health Statistics Group, at <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/NationalHealthExpendData/> (For 1960-2010 data, see Historical; National Health Expenditures by type of service and source of funds, CY 1960-2012; file nhe2012.zip. For 2013-2023 data, see Projected; NHE Historical and projections, 1965-2023, file nhe65-23.zip).



1

<https://www.cms.gov/Research-Statistics-Data-and-Systems/Statistics-Trends-and-Reports/NationalHealthExpendData/Downloads/HistoricalNHEPaper.pdf> (page 4)

2

<https://www.cms.gov/Research-Statistics-Data-and-Systems/Statistics-Trends-and-Reports/NationalHealthExpendData/Downloads/HistoricalNHEPaper.pdf> (page 1)

3

<https://www.cms.gov/Research-Statistics-Data-and-Systems/Statistics-Trends-and-Reports/NationalHealthExpendData/NationalHealthAccountsHistorical.html>

Medical expenses are the single biggest cause of bankruptcies in the United States<sup>4</sup>. Disability related to illness, including mental illness and addiction, are leading causes of homelessness for single adults, while loss of income and unreimbursed medical expenses are leading causes of homelessness for families. And, for many Americans, medical expenses will eventually eat up all or most of the assets of the family.

It is clear, that from the standpoint of the average American, health care has gotten appreciably worse in terms of expense over the last 65 years and that for many Americans the failure of our country to provide a minimum level of affordable health care for every American is having catastrophic and life altering consequences for millions of Americans every year.

Yet, although hospitals may not turn patients away, access to health care is not a "right" in this country, even though every person is going to get old and is going to get sick.

**These systemic problems related to health care have largely been exacerbated by two major factors related to government:**

- **Undue influence by major industry players over the United States Congress, state legislatures, and other elected leaders at the federal and state level.**
  - In 2016 alone pharmaceutical, insurance, hospitals, health professionals and HMO's were 5 of the 15 largest industries in terms of lobbying expenditures spending more than \$650 million lobbying policymakers<sup>5</sup> and another \$277 million in campaign contributions<sup>6</sup>.
  - A 2015 analysis of US government policy initiatives between 1982 and 2002 by Princeton researchers found that policy initiatives strongly reflected the policy preferences of economic elites in health care and other areas.<sup>7</sup>
- **Polarization of the two major parties along economic and socio-political lines and the failure of elected leaders to work collaboratively toward public-interest solutions to reduce costs and expand health care coverage.**

The most significant shift in health care policy, the Affordable Care Act of 2010 (ACA), was a large intervention by the federal government, created with the goal of making health insurance coverage available to all Americans. It passed in the US Congress on straight party lines. Since its passage, Republicans have sought to "repeal and replace" and undermine the effectiveness of the plan.

The plan has partially succeeded. Rates of the uninsured have declined. However, because of problems with the exchanges in many states, and also in part because of efforts to undermine the system and to block iterative improvements to the law, cost savings have only partially materialized, and increases in costs have not been distributed evenly.

The Independent Party of Oregon encourages policy approaches that seek to reduce costs, expand coverage and lower barriers to accessing critical care. We encourage Oregon lawmakers to work collaboratively towards these goals.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.cnbc.com/id/100840148>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.opensecrets.org/lobby/top.php?indexType=i>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.opensecrets.org/overview/sectors.php>

<sup>7</sup> <http://talkingpointsmemo.com/livewire/princeton-experts-say-us-no-longer-democracy>

<https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/perspectives-on-politics/article/testing-theories-of-american-politics-elites-interest-groups-and-average-citizens/62327F513959D0A304D4893B382B992B>