

Good morning,

I understand your Task Force begins its work today and I want to encourage and support you as much as possible to make healthcare accessible and available to everyone living in OR. I have worked and advocated for an improved healthcare system in the US for over 20 years. I also work in healthcare as (first) a hospital chaplain and now as a hospice chaplain. I have always believed that those of us providing care and seeing the many failures of our current system should be on the front lines advocating for change on behalf of our patients and families. Just yesterday I was with a patient who believes she was mis-diagnosed with her cancer, but her insurance will not allow another diagnostic scan to confirm even the presence of the cancer. How can that be right? She was born in Portland and lived most of her life in southern OR. Is this how we care for neighbors? I don't think so. Please, please: succeed in your work as soon as possible so that I don't have to hear this story again.

I live in Portland and serve hospice patients in the Portland metro area from St. Helens and Warren to Molalla and Wilsonville. Thank you on their behalf for volunteering to do this essential and historic work to bring health equity to all who live here.

As we are in the midst of a pandemic which shows no signs of abating and which may be with us for a long time, it is even more important that everyone can be tested and treated so that we stop the spread of the virus within our state. I know you cannot address the myriad problems associated with the crisis, but your work is critical: if lack of access to medical resources or financial barriers keep people from being tested and treated, Oregonians will continue to be infected, suffer, and many die. Help us make OR a leader in the nation by keeping our people healthy and (by the way) reducing the millions of dollars the state will have to spend on caring for very sick people.

It may seem crass to consider money when lives are at stake, but it is necessary. We cannot bankrupt the state--or Oregonians--in order to save ourselves. We have to re-design our system of financing healthcare so that all are covered equally and we each pay as we are able. It can be done. You have the hard task of finding the way forward that will create the political will to do it. Perhaps this is just the right moment? Maybe those who have died will leave a legacy of a better healthcare system for all of us. I think that would be quite amazing.

Thanks again for all your time, thought, and effort. I look forward to helping in any way I can and to watching your progress. And celebrating when you are successful and Oregonians finally have what they deserve: everyone able to receive medical care when needed from our excellent clinicians and hospitals.

Thank you.

Rev. Diana F. Scholl
Portland, OR