

February 6, 2019

To: Senator James Manning, Jr., and Representative David Gomberg, Co-chairs
Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Transportation and Economic Development
Oregon State Legislature

From: Mark O. Griffith, Health Care Advocate, OSPIRG

Re: HB 5011

Co-chair Manning, Co-chair Gomberg, and members of the Committee:

The Oregon State Public Interest Research Group (“OSPIRG”) strongly supports the Department of Consumer and Business Services (“DCBS”) budget for 2019-2021. In recent years, OSPIRG has worked closely with DCBS on a wide range of consumer protection issues, especially in connection with health insurance. Throughout our interactions with DCBS, we have consistently found the agency to be responsive, professional, and transparent.

This can be seen in action through DCBS’s commitment to stakeholder engagement. The Agency regularly reaches out to industry stakeholders and the advocacy community to solicit input on emerging issues, building consensus or near-consensus support even for contentious policy proposals like the regulation of surprise out-of-network medical bills.

OSPIRG worked closely with DCBS from 2011-2016 on the early implementation of Oregon’s uniquely transparent process for health insurance rate review, which has saved consumers millions of dollars in insurance premiums. We’ve continued to support the agency as it took over management of the individual health insurance marketplace in Oregon. Under the watch of DCBS, the health insurance marketplace has remained strong and competitive even in the face of limited federal support and future uncertainty.

The agency continues to work to keep health insurance affordable and accessible in Oregon while maintaining consumer protections. The DCBS administered Oregon Reinsurance program

has been projected to have reduced insurance premiums by 6% for the 2019 plan year. The agency has also worked to prevent surprise medical bills, and is still working this session to expand and preserve consumer protections in the health insurance market.

DCBS has also been tasked with implementation of 2018's drug price transparency law. In consultation with OSPIRG, other advocates, and industry stakeholders, we found that the agency drafted regulations that both followed the intent of the law and took all viewpoints into account, including both industry and consumer concerns where appropriate.

In a time of continuing uncertainty about the federal government's commitment to consumer protections and vital consumer services like the health insurance marketplace, DCBS's role as a consumer watchdog for Oregonians is more important than ever. The successful implementation of programs like drug price transparency and the Oregon reinsurance program must be supported.

For these reasons, OSPIRG urges you to support DCBS's budget for 2019-2021.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark O. Griffith', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Mark O. Griffith
OSPIRG