



Testimony in Support of House Bills 2009

March 14, 2019

House Committee on Health

Deborah Riddick

Good afternoon Chair Salinas, Vice Chair Hayden and members of the committee. My name is Deborah Riddick. I am the Director of Government Relations for the Oregon Nurses Association (ONA). We represent 15,000 registered nurses throughout the state. The ONA supports HB 2009 which would allow Oregonians, who don't qualify for medical assistance or premium tax credits, to pay for coverage within in the state's coordinated care plans.

HB 2009 is critical to the State's expansion of health care access and CCO 2.0 initiatives. By providing an affordable coverage option, within our existing coordinated care plans, the State saves by taking advantage of economies of scale. To maximize those cost savings, it is essential that all our residents have health care coverage. When more individuals have coverage, health care costs become more stable for everyone. Increasing the number of individuals, within our integrated care models, is the most efficient and effective way to fully realize our triple aim of better health, better care, at lower cost.

HB 2009 addresses a current coverage gap that many Oregonians experience by offering an option that is sensitive to the financial realities they face. By offering a Medicaid option, it eliminates the difficult choice many low wage earners must make when they forgo coverage in order to pay their rent or buy food. By making this coverage available to those with incomes exceeding 400% of the Federal Poverty Level, this bill offers an economic alternative to a segment of the population who are commonly overlooked.

According to America's Health Rankings 2018, Oregon was ranked 21st in the nation; <https://www.americashealthrankings.org/explore/annual/state/OR>. Two of the metrics that negatively impacted our ranking were health disparities, we were 42nd, and high school graduation rates – a social determinant of health, we were 48th. However, within this same study, we were 3rd in the nation in clinical outcomes and 8th in the nation in preventable hospitalizations. So, when we provide the care that our residents need, when they need it, the impact is both local and national. The passage of HB 2009 will enable more of our residents to access essential physical and mental health care services when they need it.

The health status of our residents impacts our collective quality of life. When individuals are uninsured or underinsured, we all pay. We must address the health needs of every Oregonian, or we will continue to divert funding from critical priorities like education and infrastructure to address unsustainable health care expenses. ONA supports HB 2012 because it aligns with our mission to support quality care and healthy communities in the State of Oregon; we urge your support on HB 2009.