



March 13, 2019

Oregon Latino Health Coalition  
245 SW Bancroft Street, Suite E  
Portland, OR 97239

Dear Chair Representative Salinas and members of the committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of HB 2012, which seeks to create a Medicaid buy-in option for Oregonians who do not receive, nor are eligible or can afford insurance premiums through their employer.

The Oregon Latino Health Coalition is a statewide health advocacy organization dedicated to eliminating health disparities impacting Latinx Oregonians. We believe all people deserve access to culturally-responsive and linguistically appropriate comprehensive health care. HB 2012 is a step closer to closing the gap in coverage.

Latinx Oregonians are young, diverse, growing and entrepreneurial. The population is growing faster than the national rate, representing 72 percent growth since 2000. Yet, disparities still exist for health access and outcomes. Data from the Oregon Health Authority indicates that in 2017, Latinx Oregonians have the highest uninsured rate at 15 percent while Oregon's rate stood at 6 percent.

HB 2012 gives people an opportunity to purchase a health plan to improve health outcomes and support families like David with two hard working parents and two college-student siblings, who no longer qualify for Oregon Health Plan (OHP) services due to age or immigration status. This bill would also support our growing Latinx small business owners who may not be eligible for OHP due to income, and can't afford the higher premium cost in the marketplace nor do they qualify for a sliding scale fee at local community health based centers. Our families are left with the difficult choice of visiting the doctor only when they believe it's absolutely necessary or avoiding it all together due to high cost.

Preventing disease is key to improving Oregon's health and keeping rising health costs under control. When we invest in prevention, the benefits are broadly shared. We know receiving preventive services such as cancer screenings, preventive visits and vaccinations are just a few examples of ways people can stay healthy. Yet, our families are forced with the difficult decision of choosing between their well-being and a financial burden at a disproportionate rate due to who

gets access to comprehensive health care. Although, HB 2012 is a step closer to addressing the uninsured gap in Oregon, some of our working families will still struggle to afford the monthly premiums through the Medicaid buy-in option program. Therefore, we strongly advocate for the Premium Assistance Program to support families who may need additional financial assistance to benefit from this policy.

As the Latino population continues to grow, it is increasingly important to ensure that all Latino Oregonians have access to health care coverage they need to thrive. This is why we urge you to invest in the well-being of our communities and support HB 2012.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Olivia Quiroz". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "O" and a long, sweeping underline.

Olivia Quiroz,  
Executive Director  
Oregon Latino Health Coalition