

To: House Committee on Healthcare
From: Alicia Temple, Oregon Law Center
Date: February 3, 2020
Re: Support for the HOPE Amendment

Chair Salinas and members of the committee:

On behalf of the Oregon Law Center (OLC), I respectfully request your support for HJR 202, the HOPE Amendment.

OLC's mission is to achieve justice for low-income communities of Oregon by providing a full range of the highest quality civil legal services. The vast majority of our clients have incomes at or below the federal poverty level, and work hard to provide the basic necessities for themselves and their family. Despite Oregon's recent economic recovery, many vulnerable low-income people continue to struggle to make ends meet. Oregon's housing crisis has exacerbated the challenges for our low-income community, and an increasing number of our clients are forced to make terrible choices between paying for rent, food, health care, or other necessities.

The Oregon Law Center believes that access to health care is a right, not a privilege. Income should not determine your health, and yet too often it does. Research has shown a link between poverty and poor health; people with more income tend to be healthier and live longer. Children living in poverty are especially vulnerable to the negative health effects of poverty. Oregon has done a lot of work to increase availability of healthcare insurance for individuals but true access depends on more than having insurance, it means being able to receive care without it a lifetime of medical debt. Low-income individuals are especially sensitive to even nominal increases in medical out-of-pocket costs, and modest copayments can have the effect of reducing access to necessary medical care.

Access to health care and issues of health equity are at the forefront of the needs of our clients. As the HOPE Amendment says, health care should be available to everyone. Thank you, Rep. Greenlick, for bringing this bill forward.