



June 25, 2020

**Joint Committee on the First Special Session of 2020
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court Street NE, Salem, OR 97301**

Dear Members of the Joint Committee on the First Special Session of 2020:

Health Share of Oregon is writing to express its support for SB1605, modifying the Oregon Promise program to extend eligibility to certain Oregon foster children who attain their highest level of education while in out-of-state placements.

As the state's largest Coordinated Care Organization servicing over 350,000 members in the Portland-Metro area, Health Share of Oregon recognizes the need to better understand and serve vulnerable populations throughout our collective work. Children in foster care represent one of the most vulnerable populations in Medicaid. They carry a higher risk of damaging health outcomes, face incredible social complexity, and often experience multiple changes in caregivers. These dynamics present unique challenges for health plans, care providers as well as all levels of government to properly respond to this population's unique needs.

Health Share is supportive of SB1605 because it has the potential to contribute significantly to reducing health care disparities for youth in foster care. Expanding eligibility for the Oregon Promise program to include more individuals will enhance opportunity for higher education, and help offer a better future for some of our most vulnerable residents. Moreover, the expansion of a statewide initiative such as this marks critical incremental progress and shows we are headed in the right direction. As we collaboratively address questions such as "What can we do differently for children in foster care in order to improve their health outcomes and reduce disparities?," it is programs such as Oregon Promise that we can point towards to demonstrate our commitment to youth in foster care. SB1605 serves to move us in the right direction by providing additional support and opportunity for youth in foster care. Health Share of Oregon is proud to lend our support.

If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to reach out. You can contact me through Health Share's Director of Public Policy, Yoni Kahn. He can be reached via e-mail at kahn-jochnowitzky@healthshareoregon.org.

Thank you for your time and attention to this critical issue.

Sincerely,

James Schroeder
CEO
Health Share of Oregon