



LPRO: LEGISLATIVE POLICY AND RESEARCH OFFICE

MEMORANDUM

Prepared for: Task Force on Universal Health Care
Date: August 16, 2021
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Re: Member Feedback and Priorities

INTRODUCTION

The Joint Task Force on Universal Health Care initially convened in July 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result of the public health crisis, the Task Force met monthly using virtual meeting platforms. A year later, in June 2021, the Task Force submitted its interim status [report](#). With the passage of [Senate Bill 428](#) (2021), the Task Force was granted a 12-13-month extension to complete the activities prescribed by [Senate Bill 770](#) (2019). With the summer of 2021 as a mid-point for the Task Force, staff with the project team held informational conversations with voting members of the Joint Task Force on Universal Health Care.

Staff developed a set of questions for members to consider, which were shared in advance of conversations with individual members. The questions were designed to:

- solicit members' reflections after a year of work and success: what's worked well, input on areas for improvement, and suggestions for the future;
- gather members' perspectives on public engagement to inform planning for consumer engagement to take place during part of the extension; and
- seek feedback on the draft extension plan based on the timeline provided SB 428.

Interviews lasted approximately thirty minutes and were conducted using a video call platform. Thirteen of the fourteen voting members were able to participate in the conversations. The responses, collectively,

provide critical insight as to prioritization of remaining work and suggestions around improving members' experiences.

Summarized in the memo is the synthesis and interpretation based on the statements provided by task force members in July and early August. The information below provides insight into key policy decisions and design issues that the task force will need to address as it continues to develop its proposal for a state-based universal system of coverage. The following synthesis and interpretation are based on the statements provided by task force members.

Question: as a task force member, what worked well in the past year?

Members offered responses about what worked well over the past 12 months, emphasizing the tremendous amount of work completed by the task force; impressive level of commitment, time, and resources devoted by members; task force leadership; and general appreciation for the process, specifically using virtual meetings and the utility of the technical advisory groups (TAGs). Members shared their perspectives on the TAGs, which worked well; the structure allowing members to focus on specific policies and assisting in completing a large body of work in a limited amount of time. Members frequently commented on the selection and appointment process used to establish the Consumer Advisory Committee

(CAC), describing it as a transparent process, conducted well.

“Given the restrictions around COVID-19; never meeting in person, we got a lot done.” – Member

Members were surprised with the quality of engagement given the ongoing limitations of virtual meetings. Members were also encouraged by the high level of member participation in terms of meeting participation and review of materials, particularly during an unprecedented and challenging time due to the COVID-19 pandemic, both personally and professionally.

Another frequent response applauded the level of support by staff around meeting preparation, developing background materials, and summarizing complex policy issues (e.g., written meeting summaries from the technical advisory groups, task force, and consumer advisory committee). Members specifically appreciated staff’s organization and preparation, seen as contributing to efficient task force discussions and decision-making. Members also saw value in staff’s role in serving as liaisons between the task force and TAGs and facilitating communication between groups.

Members voiced strong appreciation for the leadership of the chair and vice chair, describing how they have effectively led the task force and engaged directly with members during and in between monthly meetings. Members also commented on the importance of the chair and vice chair seeking to include different perspectives during task force deliberations, and their demonstrated diplomacy. Related, several members have been encouraged by the level of engagement by legislators. Members expressed satisfaction in having developed positive relationships with their peers and

creating a space for different perspectives to be heard and valued by the full task force.

What Worked Well – Highlights

- ✓ Member participation, commitment, and engagement
- ✓ Staff support
- ✓ Chair and vice-chair leadership
- ✓ Legislator engagement

Question: What are areas for improvement?

Members mentioned suggestions for improving the work of the task force, both from a process standpoint as well as exploring how stakeholder engagement could help refine the draft Plan proposal outlined in the June interim status report to the legislature.

Process Improvements

“My concern, from the beginning, is time. Time has always been our enemy. Not enough time to formulate things that are cohesive and explainable to the legislature.” – Member

Members expressed a desire to create additional space for members to engage in discussions during monthly meetings. This may include allotting more time for members to engage directly with one another, share their lived experiences, or reflect in a more intentional and deeper way. Members also offered a range of suggestions around enhancing members’ ability to prepare for monthly meetings that include:

- (1) improving the ability for members to access and locate meeting materials, agendas, and online resources, which is extremely limited and not helpful currently;
- (2) offering more pre-task force meeting education, additional content or subject matter expertise, and background

- information in advance of monthly meetings;
- (3) providing meeting materials at a minimum one week in advance of each task force meeting; and
 - (4) directing staff to offer homework, when appropriate, so members are prepared for discussion, avoiding using limited monthly meetings as background prep for members.

As one member described, it will be important to make more effective use of the limited task force meeting time by prioritizing member discussion and debate of challenging topics and minimizing the amount of time spent on member education and background. Lastly, in terms of efficiency, members commented on the need to avoid revisiting and re-debating task force decisions, unless specifically warranted and intentionally requested.

“We need to dig deeper into the community to get their ideas, inputs, concerns, and have the experts start to explain how it will impact Oregonians...”

– Member

Another frequent observation offered was a desire for increased access to the recognized experts. One member shared that the task force ought to engage directly with national, state, and local experts on complex issues to inform conversations and policy decisions. A concrete example shared by members was that TAGs could have benefited from inviting subject matter experts to actively participate in TAG discussions and deliberations.

Looking ahead, several members commented on the role of the steering subcommittee and whether the task force might reimagine the role of the planning subcommittee as a rotating roundtable of members, the goal being to allow all members to participate in the planning process and serve in a leadership role on the task force. Related, several members also shared that the ability

of individual members to engage at different levels in terms of their participation, capacity, and time varies, which should be acknowledged. With the backdrop of COVID-19 and the Delta variant, every member expressed their preference to transition to in-person task force meetings when it is safe from a public health standpoint. Members also shared a desire to participate in public forums as part of soliciting feedback on the draft Plan.

Two other areas for improvement identified by members are to see how the different pieces of the draft proposal fit together, ensuring the task force doesn't consider different aspects of its work in silos. The other area is the willingness among the task force to develop a range of plans while ensuring the task force avoids creating a proposal that mirrors that status quo.

Public Engagement

Almost all members commented on the importance of, and need for, public engagement as part of the extension granted by SB 428 (2021). To date, it has been difficult to engage the public to solicit input, which served as one of the biggest shortcomings of the process over the past year. One example highlighting this challenge is limiting to 10 minutes at each meeting for oral public testimony input, while also being aware that certain individuals are not comfortable with virtual presentations, which may have stymied public input. Members commented how the task force often hears from individuals and organizations who are tracking the work of the task force, are familiar with the process, and have been represented well. The general public, however, has not been represented. While acknowledging the challenges of the current COVID-19 environment, members emphasized the need for the task force to engage a broader set of communities and think creatively about how to engage community partners across the state. Another

member suggested it will be important to track public input and how the task force has responded to the feedback as it prepares and finalizes its recommendations. Several members also expressed a regret at not having better utilized the Consumer Advisory Committee to inform the discussions among the task force and TAGs.

The central theme going forward is the importance of having full and meaningful conversations with community members. The challenge, as described by one member, is how to get individuals who are working multiple jobs, self-identify as a member of a marginalized community, including BIPOC and rural residents into the room to speak

“We need to get out into communities, meet with stakeholders, and share what we learn, get their input on how they want to see a single-payer plan implemented.”

– Member

with the task force. Members also commented on engaging with other stakeholders, including health care industry representatives and employers; while community and industry engagement is different, there may be opportunities for cross-pollination the task force could explore. For example, one member mentioned inviting

“We want an informed audience, for the public to make an informed decision. To do that, we need a product and legal and financial estimates.” – Member

industry stakeholders may result in a softening of their potential opposition to the task force’s final Plan in 2022. Members commented on the importance of having meaningful conversations with stakeholders who were intentionally not included in the task force membership as specified by SB 770 (2021).

Members consistently indicated the importance of having appropriate communication tools for public engagement activities, especially in the months ahead.

Areas for Improvement – Highlights

- ✓ Increase allotted time for deliberation at meetings
 - ✓ Invite recognized experts to inform policy development
 - ✓ Reconsider role of steering subcommittee
 - ✓ Prioritize public engagement; provide members with communication tools
 - ✓ Engage industry stakeholders and employers
 - ✓ Hold in-person meetings when safe to do so
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Question: If you had to prioritize among the remaining activities highlighted in the draft extension plan, what would you like to see addressed through the extension? What are your thoughts regarding how the Task Force should prioritize the budget?

“They are all important.” – Member

Members most often prioritized public engagement and financial estimates as the two activities to prioritize as part of the extension. Members commented on the importance of a cross-section of stakeholder groups including organizations that focus on developmental disabilities and self-advocacy coalitions in Oregon. Only two members prioritized outstanding design elements as their top priority.

Financial Analysis

Six members overwhelmingly expressed the need to develop a solid and credible financial plan as their top priority. All six expressed public engagement as a close second in terms of their top two priorities. Members described key features of any financial analysis prepared for the task force as being able to:

- accurately report what it will cost Oregon to fund a single-payer plan;
- identify and quantify the different available revenue sources to finance the plan; and
- estimate the projected cost savings from both a system standpoint and to individuals, families, and employers.

“We need to have the data, no squishy figures, armed with data and subject matter experts to help us out.”

– **Member**

Members described the importance of being able to finalize a Plan that clearly conveys whether (or not) Oregonians along with employers will benefit, by how much, and for what type of Plan. As one member stated, “leave the design issues for later...we need to nail down the realities on the cost and taxation side.” Several members also expressed a preference for having a credible and complete financial analysis before engaging with community partners. As one member expressed, “without a sound financial analysis and public engagement, the remaining design elements are dead on arrival.” Another member stated the financial and revenue aspects of the draft proposal are the “weakest areas” of the plan. Another perspective shared by members is the perceived need for the task force to address costs and rely on robust analysis to understand the tradeoffs. Specifically, the task force needs an actuary to estimate financial costs of the Plan and spending, and an economist to estimate potential savings and revenue sources.

Several members commented on the need to develop a complete plan while stating that there will be a need for a more robust and detailed implementation plan if the legislature were to enact legislation authorizing a single-payer proposal based on the work of the task force.

Public Engagement

“Public engagement, what we do is genuine, the how is complicated. What is the honest way to have outreach that isn’t check the box exercise.” – Member

Six members identified public engagement as their top priority. Several reasons why members expressed public engagement as a priority were:

- If the proposal the task force develops falls flat, Oregon “will need to wait another decade to get another shot.”
- Public engagement will help with the design, to make it better and make it the Oregon way.
- Engaging communities will aid the task force in identifying public concerns with the plan.

In a time of COVID-19, members raised the issue of how the task force can be creative with respect to community outreach and take advantage of virtual meetings and use of social media tools to meet individuals where they are at. Members also shared the importance of engaging rural communities and offered several suggestions to engage rural communities that included soliciting the assistance of county commissioners, legislators, and other local elected officials. Several members shared their perspective that the task force ought to be honest with the public in formulating the final design based on cost estimates, and if needed, scale back the final proposal and inform the public that not everything can be included if the final set of estimates exceed available revenue sources.

Priorities for Extension – Highlights

- ✓ Develop a credible, accurate, and complete financial analysis
- ✓ Financial and revenue analysis that informs who will benefit from the Plan

- ✓ Engage BIPOC and rural communities to refine the draft Plan
- ✓ Distinguish “Plan” from implementation

Question: What does success look like at the end of the task force?

“Success is we come up with a definitive plan to present to the legislature...we need to put together a plan we feel is the best for Oregon. It is up to the legislature to decide whether or not to move forward.” – Member

Members most frequently stated success is best defined as developing a proposal the legislature can put forward as a legislative concept in the 2023 legislative session. Part of success, according to several members, is the task force’s ability to put forward a proposal that is actionable, including a proposal that may need to include a staged implementation plan, and also a plan that doesn’t remove benefits from individuals and families currently covered through public and privately financed health insurance plans. As a handful of members stated, “I don’t want to end up with something that sits on the shelf.”

Other key elements for the final proposal are:

- clear assessment of what the plan is and isn’t for all Oregon residents and what it will cost compared to the status quo, and if the proposed Plan will maintain or lower overall health care costs in Oregon;
- cost-effectiveness in that the Plan offers a better distribution of resources including funding social determinants of health, and it is equitable for Oregonians;
- well-researched and credible financial estimates for legislators; and
- clear and realistic timeline for legislators that includes timing for requesting federal waivers and any other federal authority necessary to implement the proposal.

“Success looks different at different stages. I stop someone on the street, and they are aware of our work. All have heard that “universal health care” is a thing and are asking a lot of questions – at this stage.... we will be successful if folks know about the work of the task force.”

– Member

Members also commented on centering the perspectives for individuals who will be most impacted by a single-payer proposal, which may require difficult conversations in the coming months. A key consideration is to educate the public and increase awareness about what a single- or one-payer system could mean for Oregon residents. Members shared that it will be important not to avoid controversial issues or overly focus on political considerations, but stay focused on developing a robust framework for the legislature.

Members also commented that success requires engaging industry stakeholders who may be adversely impacted by the task force’s final proposal. This means the task force might need to focus on developing a robust single-payer financing proposal that recognizes and incorporates the principles of economic redistribution and social justice as part of the plan’s long-term implementation.

Success for Members – Highlights

- ✓ Prepare an actionable proposal for the legislature
 - ✓ Center the voices of individuals most impacted by the Plan
 - ✓ Increase awareness and education about the Plan
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