

To: Joint Task Force on Universal Health Care  
Date: 12/16/2021

Submitted by: Tom Sincic, MSN, Health Care for All Oregon President

Thanks to all the JTFUHC members for your continued dedication to this transformative work to bring health equity to Oregon.

I submitted for your viewing an inspiring 80 minute video from the Oregon Center for Public Policy on Economic Justice. (Thanks to Chuck Sheketoff for founding this organization). As the video is a little lengthy and I did not have time to create key edits, I present some key messages as they relate to the necessary work you are doing. If you want to save some time, I suggest you can actually start at 18:41 with the message from Michelle DePas of Meyer Memorial Trust which is a thanks to the members of this Task Force because you are working on economic justice for all, a call to center equity, and act with urgency then the introduction and message of Dr. Darrick Hamilton. Dr. Hamilton's initial message ends at 42:21.

In relationship to the work before you, I provide these thoughts from the session.

Dr. Hamilton calls on us to "lead with justice--don't compromise justice". Further, "lead with your values.... That's not up for discussion". The Task Force has been given the blue print in SB 770 that states clearly those values that are not up for discussion.

Let's all keep in mind that Oregon has created a vision of health equity by 2030. The Oregon Health Authority has been charged with making that a reality. The work you are doing is to design a publicly funded single payer universal healthcare system with the assistance of OHA is core to that success. We will not get there without it. We hope that the Oregon Health Authority recognizes this.

Dr. Hamilton calls for economic justice with resources as a right. Dr. Hamilton states: "Inclusive economic rights as a pillar towards freedom." One of those identified essential resources throughout is access to healthcare.

Everyone knows that basic healthcare is now at the whim of the markets. Markets have not been and will not bring economic or healthcare justice. Continued market based approaches create the possibility of derailment of efforts by the dedicated members of this Task Force.

Other important points made by Dr. Hamilton.

1. The current system deliberately creates persistent inequality for those with low wealth or low income which is disproportionately impacting black and brown families. I encourage you to take the time to listen to all of Dr. Hamilton's words which captures the structural racism imbedded in all of this and the health consequences as measured by mortality rates.
2. "Rather than empowering the poor we manage them." "We engage in income maintenance rather than income mobility." Current Medicaid eligibility restrictions are one such system that prevent the hard working from achieving social mobility. People that are thinking about earning a little more know that they are faced with losing their Oregon Health Plan benefits and actual loss of income if they need to purchase the unusable so called health insurance with its high deductibles and copays. People stick with jobs rather than seeking new opportunities strictly to keep this so called insurance. All being trapped.

3. Productivity gains go to the elite. We see this again with the billions in profiteering of the pharma with the Covid vaccine.
4. Public intervention is needed to crowd out private power that does not insure quality healthcare. This is where your work comes in with the strong advocacy efforts that will follow including addressing the issue of federal waivers.

Dr. Hamilton challenges us to “be undeterred by what people think is possible or not possible”. “Nothing is given if not carefully constructed and then demanded”. The Task Force role as clearly outlined is with public engagement to carefully construct. The people will then have an opportunity starting with the November 2022 ballot to demand.

To expect the legislature to take your work and pass the bill to create the Health Care for All Oregon Plan because the people have already spoken. It will be time to place the resource of healthcare as a right for all.

Video link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mb-lsq7NoAg>