

To the Bridge Program Task Force,

I'm writing in support of a robust bridge plan because expanding health care has the potential to transform and improve lives.

As a retired emergency physician, I can tell you that throughout my career in the emergency department, I saw many patients who benefit a great deal when they have health care, especially low-income individuals who may have gone without for many years before qualifying for coverage under the Affordable Care Act. Many of these individuals are among the hardest-working Oregonians around, doing some of the most difficult jobs while juggling many life challenges. And some years, they earn too much to qualify for health care yet don't have employer-provided coverage.

This churn in coverage hurts individuals' health, and puts our public health at risk, particularly as COVID-19 continues to spread and future public health crises loom. By expanding the threshold to qualify for health care for Oregonians who work as cashiers, grocery store clerks, transportation workers, daycare providers, ride-share drivers and those who work part-time, we can improve and save tens of thousands of lives. These are people who earn too much to qualify for health care yet may not be able to afford insurance on the marketplace.

A bridge plan for Oregon is a reasonable, common-sense step toward a more robust expansion of health care that will prevent many people from falling through coverage gaps and going without access to health care. Individuals, families and pregnant mothers who would otherwise be left without health care should not get left behind with Oregon's bridge plan.

Thank you for your efforts to implement Oregon's bridge plan and your work to help physicians better care for our patients.

Sincerely,

Robert Lowe, MD