



July 11, 2022

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments on the Universal Health Care Task Force's draft proposal. Duckwall Fruit is a 103-year-old family owned and operated business based in Hood River. We employ 320 people and are proud to offer competitive wages and benefits. In addition to our employees, we support over 70 fruit growing operations, which in turn employ countless additional people throughout the region, and numerous other local businesses who provide components of our supply chain or important services.

We agree with the premise that all Oregonians should have access to affordable health care. However, we do not believe this proposal addresses that problem in a sustainable, effective way. Not only would it create a cumbersome state-run program; it would do so through exorbitant taxes on employers and employees. And all of that when 95.4% of Oregonians already have access to health care. This proposal seems like an outsized solution to the problem of access to care for less than 5-percent of Oregonians.

Our business—like countless others—is facing extraordinarily prohibitive cost increases due to high inflation, rising transportation and fuel costs, dramatic increases in our overall tax burden, and the cost of compliance with numerous new regulatory programs. Additional payroll and income taxes will only erode the ability of businesses like ours to provide good wages and benefits to more employees. Further, this proposal will erode our ability to remain competitive when compared to those operating in other states.

Our concern with the single-payer, state-run program extends beyond cost. This is an expensive and disruptive model. Further, the State of Oregon's history for administering large-scale programs, such as Cover Oregon, is not great. A state run single-payer health care system would be even more complex.

I encourage you to consider the impact this proposal will more deeply have on Oregon's employers and the opportunities available for Oregonians, and to balance the need with an appropriately scaled program. I urge the task force to table this proposal and focus on the innovative programs Oregon is already working on to increase access and lower the cost of care.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Ed Weathers", is written over a horizontal line.

Ed Weathers
President, Duckwall Fruit