



March 8, 2021

Attn: Members of the Senate Committee on Health Care

Members of the Senate Committee on Health Care,

On behalf of the Association of Oregon Counties (AOC), representing Oregon's 36 county governments, I request your support for SB 641, the bill to provide health care coverage to youth under the age of 19 in pre-adjudication.

Current federal law does not differentiate a person convicted of a crime from a person incarcerated prior to conviction, and as a result, many of those awaiting trial are left without the continuity of their federal health benefits. 'Innocent until proven guilty' applies to all under the Constitution, and therefore, all individuals under the criminal justice system's purview. Individuals awaiting trial are owed their full set of rights, including access to their human and civil rights, and without limits to their federal health benefits. We also know that 9,000 youths awaiting trial in detention across the country have been impacted by losing access to CHIP benefits -- a large driver in keeping low-income kids safe and healthy.

Stable access to care allows for better coordination of health care services, improved health outcomes, lowering short-term costs on local jails and taxpayers, and long-term costs on the federal government. AOC supports state and federal efforts to provide health care to those awaiting trial, including youth, adults, veterans, and individuals with disabilities.

AOC urges your support for SB 641.

Regards,

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