

Good afternoon. My name is Holly Sorensen and I am the Outreach Coordinator for Northeast Oregon Network, also known as NEON. We are a community-based nonprofit based in La Grande, OR and we serve Union, Baker and Wallowa Counties with a program that has been operating for the lifespan of the Affordable Care Act to ensure that Eastern Oregon residents have access to health coverage and affordable care.

We've developed strong relationships as grant-funded partners with both OHA's Community Partner Outreach Program and the DCBS Community Partner program while serving Eastern Oregon. These partnerships have supported us in providing free enrollment assistance for health insurance programs through Medicaid and the Health Insurance Marketplace Exchange. Beyond helping people apply for and enroll in coverage, this work also involves a great deal of collaboration with state staff to support Oregonians in understanding their health coverage, and how to best use it to meet their health needs by breaking down barriers and addressing social determinants of health for more equitable outcomes. Often we help consumers to transition from the exchange to Medicaid and vice versa when they experience life changes that affect their eligibility.

Our partnerships with the state staff of both these programs have aided in our success in effectively helping community members navigate these often complex systems and processes. They also keep us up to date on the latest best practices, legislation that impacts these programs and Oregonians, and they provide us with training, tools and resources to be effective in our work.

I am testifying today in support of Senate Bill 65 (SB65) because we at NEON agree that the transfer of the Oregon Health Insurance Marketplace from DCBS to OHA will better align health care policymaking across multiple programs, improve existing models of care, and drive the reforms we would like to see in Oregon to ensure access to affordable and quality care for Oregonians.

We agree that housing the Marketplace under OHA will help them to better assess and manage cost drivers to reduce the rate of growth in health care spending in Oregon. This will be essential for making future investments in our communities and the services that address social determinants of health while advancing the collective goal of eliminating health inequity.

Lastly, we believe that this transfer will strengthen our partnership with these programs that already support our mission at NEON to improve the health and wellbeing of communities we serve.

I thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony in support of Senate Bill 65.