

Memorandum

To: Chair Prusak, Vice-Chairs Salinas and Hayden and Members of the House Committee on Health Care

From: Danielle Sobel, Policy & Governmental Affairs Sr. Director, Oregon Primary Care Association
Marty Carty, Governmental Affairs Director, Oregon Primary Care Association

Date: March 16, 2021

Re: Support HB 2164

On behalf of the Oregon Primary Care Association (OPCA), we respectfully request your support for Cover All People, HB 2164.

OPCA is a non-profit organization, with a mission to support Oregon's 34 community health centers, also known as federally qualified health centers, in leading the transformation of primary care to achieve health equity for all. Community health centers deliver integrated medical, dental, and behavioral health services to **466,000—or one in 10—Oregonians**, many of whom otherwise would not be able to see a medical provider. Community health centers are providers within the CCO networks, providing care to some of Oregon's most vulnerable populations, including **one in four Oregon Health Plan members**.

Community health centers already provide high-quality integrated medical, dental and behavioral health care to many of the Oregonians that Cover All People would help, and will continue to do so. This is a core part of the mission of community health centers – accepting all patients regardless of insurance status or ability to pay. On average, **over 18% of patients seen at an Oregon community health center are uninsured**.

Health centers provide essential health care services, but are only one part of the overall health delivery system that individuals need to access. And we know that without coverage, many patients unfortunately delay accessing primary, oral and behavioral health care leading to **poor health outcomes** and **increased costs to the health care system**. For these reasons and more, we strongly believe all Oregonians should have full health coverage.

Extending health care coverage to those who are not able to access it through existing programs would allow these individuals to access specialty care and inpatient services without fear of unaffordable costs. It would also improve access to care in communities where there might not be a community health center, and provide families with more choices for providers, since not all providers work at a health center. **Over 30% of patients seen at community health centers live in rural Oregon**. The innovate pilot program set up under HB 2164 means that health centers will be able to redeploy limited federal resources to reach deeper into rural and underserved communities to deliver more care for the remaining uninsured and underinsured in our state not eligible under the pilot.

Every person deserves to have access to the tools and resources to achieve a healthy life. Health insurance coverage is one of the single most effective ways to ensure that people receive the preventative health and medical care they need to thrive. HB 2164 extends health insurance coverage to medically underserved people including undocumented adults, DACA recipients, legal permanent residents and young adults who age out of Cover All Kids. Only Oregonians under 138% (190% for pregnant women) of the poverty level would be eligible. This extension will ensure that recipients receive timely and preventative health care.

Oregon needs to take the next step and extend health care coverage to all people eligible through this initial first step. OPCA recognizes that having insurance not only promotes health and increases access to health-generating services, but also decreases health-related disparities. We hope that you will join us in support of Cover All People.