

March 17, 2021

## **Testimony in Support of HB 2164-3**

Chair Prusak, Vice-Chair Hayden, Vice-Chair Salinas, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Janet Bauer (she/her), Senior Policy Analyst for the Oregon Center for Public Policy, and I respectfully submit this testimony in support of HB 2164-3, on behalf of the Center.

The Oregon Center for Public Policy is a think tank dedicated to improving the economic outcomes for all Oregonians, particularly low-income families and Oregonians of color, through research and analysis.

HB 2164-3 establishes the Health Care for All Oregon program to ensure that all Oregonians have access to the health care they need — a fundamental building block of economic opportunity. The program would serve Oregonians who are currently shut out of many health care systems – DACA recipients, many lawful permanent immigrants, undocumented workers and other adults, including young adults aging out of the Cover All Kids health coverage.

HB 2164-3 would promote health equity in Oregon. Latinos comprise Oregon's largest group of immigrants. Because of exclusionary health insurance structures based on immigration status, Latinos have one of the highest uninsured rates among racial and ethnic groups in the state. This situation has additional structural roots: U.S. immigration policy has made it exceedingly difficult for immigrants from Central America and Mexico to gain authorized status, with wait times to apply for a green card now as long as 13 and 22 years, respectively.

HB 2164-3 would make for a healthier population, including among our children. When parents have health insurance, their children gain better access to health care and have improved health. Research additionally shows that healthy child development is directly influenced by the health and wellbeing of parents.

The pandemic has enabled us to better understand the interconnectedness of our economic and social systems, and how its shortcomings impact everyone. For immigrant Oregonians who play a vital role in supplying the goods and services we rely on not to have access to health care undermines the health and well-being of all of us.

For these reasons, we urge you to support HB 2164-3.