

I am Rev. Caren Caldwell, a retired minister from Ashland and a member of the Medford United Church of Christ. We recently discussed SJR 12 in our Justice and Peace Ministry Team. We have long supported and advocated for universal health care, including for the Oregon Health Plan. No one should be denied health care for lack of ability to pay for it.

Oregon supposedly provides mental health parity through employer insurance plans and the Medicaid Parity Rule. But it's not working. We must modernize the definition of behavioral health insurance parity. Oregon must ensure that people have improved access to treatments and supports that truly treat their underlying behavioral health conditions so they may live lives in actual recovery.

Behavioral health parity should be raised up as a human right in the Oregon constitution along with medical health. I suggest wording the constitutional amendment that goes before Oregon voters this way:

It is the obligation of the state to ensure that every resident of Oregon has access to cost-effective, clinically appropriate and affordable medical and behavioral health care as a fundamental right.

Thank you for your consideration.