



Sharon Meieran
Multnomah County Commissioner, District 1

To: House Committee on Health Care
From: Sharon Meieran, Multnomah County Commissioner
Date: May 6, 2021
Re: Support for Senate Joint Resolution 12

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

As a Multnomah County Commissioner and a practicing emergency physician, I am very proud to support Senate Joint Resolution 12 which would further codify our state's commitment to ensuring that every Oregonian has real access to cost-effective, appropriate and affordable health care as a fundamental right.

We *all* benefit when everyone has meaningful access to health care. This was true before the COVID-19 pandemic, and this reality has only intensified over the past year. Nobody should have to make the impossible choice between paying their rent and getting a prescription they need, or have cost and coverage considerations weigh on their decisions to seek care.

Working in the emergency department, I see firsthand what happens when people don't have access to preventive care, and often end up in what is often the most expensive, least effective place to address their underlying healthcare needs. And working at the county level - the safety net for those who are the most vulnerable, underserved and historically marginalized - I see the lack of access to healthcare plays out across our community. Individuals are suffering and our state is paying - literally - too great a price.

The time to act is now. Over the past several years, the Legislature has taken important, incremental steps toward equitable, universal access to health care, most recently through the work of the Joint Task Force On Universal Health Care. As SJR 12 states, "*Oregonians should not be divided between those who can afford to be healthy and those who cannot.*" I believe strongly that these values are shared by communities across the state, and encourage you to pass SJR 12 as a reflection of this commitment to accessible and affordable health care.

Thank you for considering this testimony in support of access to healthcare for all Oregonians.

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon Meieran