

I am in support that all human beings should have access to affordable, clinically appropriate, and accessible care. I work in an area of health care that is often not recognized as covered by many insurance plans (hearing health care), but when the Affordable Health Care Act went into effect and Oregon expanded Medicaid I saw the impact access to affordable health care had directly on our community. I will share one story with you that really spoke volumes to me about the importance of early intervention and access to care. A woman in her early 40's came into see me. She had just gotten insurance for the first time in 20 years because of the passing of the ACA. The insurance she purchased on the exchange allowed her to come in to have her first diagnostic hearing test in many, many years. She had a cholesteatoma growing in her middle ear space that had grown through to her inner ear on its way to her brain. Left untreated this benign growth that is very easy to medically manage would have killed her. As it was because delays in her intervention she was left with a severe hearing loss and facial disfigurement from the amount of bone and tissue that needed to be removed to save her. What should have been an easy in office procedure resulted in severe complications and hospitalization with multiple surgeries to resolve. Had she had access to affordable health care sooner, the outcome would have been very different. She was hard working, employed at a small company that was unable to extend health insurance. Insurance has no business being tied to employment anyway. Access to health care through a public means at an affordable rate allows people the flexibility to be in jobs they will excel at instead of ones that hold them hostage because of access to care.