

I am writing in support of Oregon recognizing healthcare as a basic right, and recognizing the obligation of the state to ensure that this right is meaningfully honored. While the US healthcare system has long been inadequate, allowing countless people to suffer and die needlessly, and forcing countless others into destitution, this pandemic should have made clear to even the most reluctant that the current system has failed. A system in which healthcare is tied to employment is a system that will leave the most vulnerable unprotected, and that will fail in times of crisis - as in the current pandemic. The most basic obligation of any government is to protect the lives of those it governs. Assuming legal responsibility for ensuring that everyone has access to healthcare is a basic precondition of meeting this obligation. I urge the legislature to advance this bill - and to go further, to move towards universal, free-at-point-of-service healthcare (i.e. Medicare for All) as the only policy that will truly ensure equal access for all individuals, regardless of personal wealth, rather than a two-tiered system of platinum care for the few and an over-stretched, bare-bones public system for the rest.