

When it comes to advocacy for a publicly-funded, universal health care system in America or at the state level, some people like to say, "How can we afford to do that?"

My question back to them is this: "How can we afford NOT to?"

We simply must act now. In America today, 18% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) goes to health care. That is, 18 cents out of every dollar spent in America goes to paying for health care. That's 18 cents not going to teaching our children, rebuilding our crumbling infrastructure, or investing in other aspects of our economy to make sure the needs of our people are met and that we are positioned to tackle the challenges of the 21st Century. And these costs are only slated to rise to 30% of GDP by 2050! And on top of this - over 30 million Americans lack health care insurance - and 44 million more are underinsured - operating under the facade of coverage only to be ambushed by health care bills if they require care - or worse - bankrupted by medical billing. Compare this with other countries who pay closer to 10% of their GDP for health care costs - but who guarantee health care to all of their citizens!

AMERICA CAN DO BETTER.

And it's not different here in Oregon. I attended an ECONorthwest Health Care Leaders Breakfast Roundtable a few years ago. I was not surprised to see that Health Care was the second biggest industry in Oregon, right after Manufacturing. But despite all the money going towards paying for health care, so many Oregonians lack health care, are reliant on the Oregon Health Plan, or are paying a disproportionate amount of their hard-earned paychecks for costly medical insurance.

OREGON CAN DO BETTER.

I believe the Health Care for All Oregon Task Force will be able to find solutions that make universal health care in Oregon an equitable, effective, and affordable reality. The money is already in the system. We just need to smartly redirect it straight to the source - the health care providers - and cut the big insurance companies out of the process while simultaneously using Oregon's market leverage as a state buyer to drive down pharmaceutical costs. Having dozens of smaller organizations going head to head with Big Pharma will never drive down costs. Oregon needs to attain market power like the VA, who then has the ability to dictate prices to Big Pharma instead of the other way around. More costs savings for consumers, more cost savings for the state.

For additional reference on the financial aspects and Oregonians' will to pay for health care in a different way to ensure coverage, I am including links to the 2019 survey commissioned by Warren George, a Republican out of Corvallis, which showed Oregonians' favorable views of adopting these type of sensible solutions to ensuring everyone in our communities have health care.

When I was in Texas, earning my dual masters in healthcare administration and MBA, I was so proud when our faculty would highlight Oregon as a leader in medical marijuana, the Oregon Health Plan, death with dignity, and other advances in terms of forward-leaning health care innovations.

I believe it is time for Oregon to lead again and I encourage the Senators to please support the continued work of the Health Care for All Task Force with the passage of SB 428.

"Everybody in—Nobody out!"

Thank you so much for listening.

Respectfully,

Valdez G. Bravo, FACHE  
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Source 1: Warren George's 2019 Poll on Oregonians' Views on Universal Health Care - <https://variedstrengths.com/>  
Source 2: Lund Report article summarizing Warren George Poll - <https://www.thelundreport.org/content/poll-shows-many-oregonians-would-support-hefty-tax-fund-universal-health-care>