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February 10, 2022

Chair Prusak, Vice-Chair Salinas, Vice-Chair Hayden
and Members, House Committee on Health Care
Oregon House of Representatives
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 9731

Re: Support for HB 4035 – redetermination concept

Dear Members of the House Committee on Health Care:

On behalf of Valley Family Health Care and the 10,000+ rural/frontier eastern Oregon patients that we served last year; I respectfully request your support for HB 4035. The updated language in that bill will ensure thousands of Oregonians can continue to access health care coverage after the federal COVID-19 public health emergency is declared over.

Valley Family is a community-based Federally Qualified Health Center that has served the rural/frontier communities of southwest Idaho and eastern Oregon for over 40 years. In calendar 2021, we provided primary medical care, behavioral health care, and/or dental services to 21,231 patients. These were some of the most vulnerable members of our region, including those without insurance, those with inadequate insurance, seasonal and migrant farmworkers, homeless individuals/families, military veterans, and other residents with financial, psychological, geographic, or other barriers to care.

Over the last two years, Oregon's Medicaid enrollment has grown due in part to the pandemic. As a nation we recognized that access to health care was fundamental to weathering the crisis and eventually moving past it. That is why our federal partners put Medicaid redeterminations for eligibility on hold. That means anyone enrolled in Medicaid could not lose access to their health care coverage during the pandemic. Here in Oregon, we now have the lowest ever uninsured rate in state history.

Today, 1.4 million people have access to comprehensive life-saving health care services through the Oregon Health Plan. At Valley Family Health Care, we know that improving access to health care is one of the best instruments we have available to achieve more equitable health outcomes while also increasing efficiency and decreasing costs to the health care delivery system. Health centers like ours have been found to be effective because of their community accessibility and ability to furnish timely and high-quality comprehensive integrated health care services in a culturally responsive manner.

Healthy Families. Strong Communities.

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The public health emergency will expire on April 16, 2022, absent further federal action. When this occurs, the Oregon Health Authority will begin a 12-month process to redetermine the eligibility of all 1.4 million Oregonians currently enrolled in the Oregon Health Plan. Many will lose access to life-saving health care.

Oregon's usual redetermination process will likely result in a loss of health care coverage for hundreds of thousands of Oregonians – those who can least afford it. For working Oregonians who earn 138-200% of the federal poverty level, buying coverage on the Exchange is out of reach. These individuals and families will become uninsured, and their health care needs will go unsupported. We must do better! That is why we support the proposed new language in HB 4035 that would:

- Develop an affordable bridge or basic health plan for Oregonians who earn between 138 and 200 percent of the federal poverty line; and
- Invest in outreach and enrollment activities that we know work such as community health workers, community navigators, outreach and enrollment workers, and the state's ONE system.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our support for the policy concepts stated above.

Timothy S. Heinze, MHA
Chief Executive Officer
Valley Family Health Care

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