

Submitter: Richard Bruno
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Rules
Measure: HB4035

Dear Chair Smith Warner and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to share my comments on House Bill 4035. I'm the Senior Medical Director of Primary Care at Central City Concern in Portland, and I'm grateful to be able to share some thoughts from the perspective of a practicing family physician in support of improving access to lower the cost of health care in Oregon. As the provisions of the bill are still being finalized, it's important to me to advocate for progress toward ensuring my patients and all Oregon residents can access quality, affordable care.

As a physician, I support the intent of HB 4035 to improve health care access and lower costs. Ensuring Oregonians can keep coverage after the public health emergency ends will be critical as we deal with the lingering and far-reaching impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Developing a Bridge Plan task force to pursue longer term solutions for our state's health care system, including a potential public option, will benefit my patients and their families for generations to come.

This legislation has the power to address some of the most pressing challenges I see as a physician. I see every day how the high cost of unaffordable health care is the single most common barrier to individual medical care and to public health. When people delay care, they can get sicker, and sometimes suffer life-threatening complications.

Access to health care when people need it, not only when they can afford it, can make the difference between life and death. One fall a few years ago, I saw a grandmother who could not afford health insurance but did not qualify for subsidies. She ended up in the emergency room with blood sugars through the roof, because she had to buy the 4 grandchildren who live with her new clothes for the school year and couldn't afford her insulin that month. She spent days in the hospital on an insulin drip, at a cost of thousands of dollars a day, for something that could have been prevented had she had affordable health care access.

We have an opportunity to prevent these tragedies — to act proactively and ensure that after the public health emergency ends, people aren't left cold without needed health care access. We also have an opportunity, through the Bridge Plan task force, to reduce coverage gaps for people and ensure more continuity of quality, affordable care moving forward.

HB 4035 can have immediate benefits for Oregonians and our communities, while setting our state on a path to achieve greater health equity and fairness in the future. As a physician and Oregonian, I strongly believe that universal healthcare for everyone in our state should be our goal.

Thank you for your work to make health care more affordable for our fellow Oregonians and my patients, and thank you for the opportunity to share my thoughts.

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