

I am writing in support of SB 704, a bill to establish a Universal Health Plan Governance Board. In the State of Oregon, health care is a human right since the passage of Measure 111. The UHPGB is the next step to ensuring that our state meets the constitutional rights of all its residents.

I am a lifelong Oregonian, and over the years I have seen too many people failed by our struggling health system. I've known parents who, despite two incomes and insurance, hold off on necessary medical care for their children because copays are too expensive. I've heard teenagers remind their friends "no matter what happens, don't call an ambulance, my mom can't afford it." I've watched people hold back their lives, put marriage and promotions and better jobs on hold because they'd make too much to qualify for OHP, but not enough to afford private insurance. I've spent days on the phone chasing down systems that were designed to fill in the gaps, only to find out that they've been quietly defunded with nothing to replace them.

Our emergency rooms are flooded with people who don't need to be there, people who could have been spared devastating complications if only they'd had access to preventative care. But the gaps in the system, the pages and pages of health conditions not covered by Medicare, the bureaucratic steps and jumps it takes to even get insurance leave thousands of people in Oregon suffering unnecessarily. Oregon deserves better. We've been through enough.

It's long past time to give Oregonians a chance to take control of their own health. I urge you to take the next step towards a fair and functional health care system. Pass SB 704 now.