

Submitter: Valdez Bravo
On Behalf Of: Self
Committee: Senate Committee On Health Care
Measure: SB704

My name is Valdez Bravo. An Oregon native of LatinX and Standing Rock Sioux descent, I was born at Oregon Health & Sciences University (OHSU) in 1977 and grew up in Salem.

I am writing in support of SB 704 from the perspective of a healthcare professional with over 25 years of experience, as a lifeline public servant, and as a Board Certified Fellow in the American College of Healthcare Executives.

Three weeks out of high school I joined the U.S. Army. I was fortunate enough to enlist as a Medical Equipment Repairman, working in Army hospitals for a little over eight years in the U.S., Germany, and with the 48th Combat Support Hospital in Afghanistan as part of Operation Enduring Freedom. Following my Honorable Discharge from the Army in 2003, I went to work at OHSU for six months before joining the Department of Veterans Health Administration in May 2004.

For the next 18 years, I served at the VA in a variety of roles of increasing responsibility, ranging from Biomedical Engineering Technician, Supervisor, and Chief; Lean Healthcare Transformational Coach and Program Manager; Primary Care Administrator; and Associate Director. I now work as an executive leader in local government ensuring that my local community gets the health care they need to not only survive but thrive.

All my life - whether as a kid receiving care from Chemawa Indian Health Center; as an active duty soldier in the US Army; as a Veteran; or now in county government - I have seen the benefits of a government-funded health care delivery system which has taken the profit out of the business of delivering care.

Oregon's providers don't want to see their patients suffer, go without, decline, or die because of their inability to pay. They also don't want to see them fall through the cracks or get left behind in our highly fragmented system.

The VA's big draw and a major reason that providers and nurses love working for the VA was that they didn't have to fight with insurance companies and other middlemen to get their patients the clinically indicated care their patients need. Staff at the VA were able to advocate for the care their patients needed because the organization's mission is not rooted in a profit motive but in a people motive: a motive to do what's right by the patient based on clinical indication rather than what the patient can afford or what an insurance company will cover.

While there are many possible models of what a publicly-funded, universal health care system could look like, simply bringing all Oregonians under one centralized system of coverage, delivery, and payment would bend the cost curve while expanding access. You likely know by now that 18% of America's gross domestic product is eaten up by healthcare costs - but the health outcomes of our people do not reflect that. The exorbitant costs, which come at the expense of education, infrastructure, and other critical needs translate into profit for insurance companies and Big Pharma rather than into lowered infant mortality rates or lowered rates of chronic disease.

I imagine a world where every Oregonian has the care they need to not only survive but THRIVE. IMAGINE a world where EVERYONE YOU NOW - your friends, your family, your neighbor, your coworker, everyone in your community has access to the care they need when they get sick.

I believe health care is a human right. I believe everyone should be able to access the care they need regardless of their age, race, employment status, military service, ability to pay, or any other factor. And that is why - as a masters trained health care leader, as a lifelong public servant, and as a proud Oregonian, I encourage the Senate to establish the Universal Health Plan Governance Board, and to direct the Board to create a comprehensive plan for implementing a Universal Health Plan beginning in 2027.

Respectfully,

Valdez G. Bravo, FACHE
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Lake Oswego, Oregon