

TO: Senate Committee on Healthcare
FROM: William B. Dalton, Ph.D.
RE: SB 704
DATE: February 13, 2023

Dear Senator Patterson and Healthcare Committee Members:

I am writing to you to strongly **urge your support for SB 704**, to establish, empower, and fund a “Governance Board” as a next step in Oregon’s essential efforts to make Oregon’s healthcare system truly accessible, affordable, and effective.

As a Community Mental and Public Healthcare Administrator (in Tennessee, Kentucky, Washington, and here in Oregon...), and a private non-profit mental health advocacy Director (NAMI-Oregon)-- for over 35 years, I have lived the struggles -- of the State and Counties to develop and fund an effective, efficient, accessible, and affordable healthcare system; and of the ‘public’ -- to find accessible and affordable healthcare. To my/our dismay, both sides/ partners in this effort have failed terribly to achieve their goals. As a result, despite sincere and at-times ‘model’ approaches and programs, Oregon continues to have an increasingly expensive and yet-often highly ineffective system of care.

The recent study by the legislatively-appointed “Task Force on Universal Healthcare” has done an excellent and thorough review of our current system. Sadly, reading the results, even the most positive among us would have to conclude that currently Oregonians suffer with an **expensive non-Health, limited-Care, non-System**. Importantly, the Task Force did not end its work with these conclusions; but its members developed specific, far-reaching recommendations for how we might finally address these failings with long-term, affordable solutions.

Not surprisingly, solving the problems of a System burdened with decades of ever-more-complex funding sources, infinitely increasing layers of administrative bureaucracy, books-worth of nearly unintelligible and often-conflicting guidelines, major gaps in both services and constituencies served ... = The necessary changes are neither ‘easy’ nor will they be ‘quick.’ But, with authority and funding, the recommended “Governance Board” (with the leadership of health-care experts, experienced providers, employers, and consumers) will allow Oregon to FULLY assess and plan how to thoroughly reorganize our current system. We deserve and desperately need a system that will facilitate our major investment in healthcare – by government, employers, and consumers – to be far more effectively (and eventually more *affordably*..) utilized.

This is not a political issue. It is not another effort to remind us of our often ‘partisan divide. This represents a most timely and necessary revampment of a system and approach that have increasingly proven themselves unworkable and unaffordable.

NOW is the time to change that. SB 704 is our next essential step in that change process.

Thank You for your consideration.

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