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On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Health Care
Measure: SB704

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony. I've been working in health care policy for nearly a decade now. I was a health policy advisor to US Congressman Bill Pascrell and am currently finishing law school down at Stanford, where I've been studying the legal pathway to state-based single-payer. I write in vigorous support of SB 704.

Oregon, to its great credit, has a low uninsurance rate, but our system remains fundamentally inequitable. One reason for this is that certain patients--especially those on Medicaid and Medicare--are "worth" less because providers are reimbursed less to see them. We witness the effects of this daily, whether it is a lack of access to mental health services or the closure of a community's only birthing center due to an insufficient number of "profitable" patients coming through their doors. This is no way to structure a health care system, and it will only be fixed with unified financing, ie single payer. SB 704 is also about unleashing economic dynamism--the ability for all Oregonians to chase and fulfill their dreams. We all know people locked in a job so they can hang onto health benefits, or businesses burdened by the cost of navigating our insurance system. Single-payer gives us the chance to join the rest of the developed world by untethering health insurance from employment.

Two brief points on the technical policy. First, there is absolutely a legal path to creating single-payer in Oregon. We do not need an ERISA waiver, and there are numerous paths to securing necessary federal funds. Second, on cost. As the Task Force report shows, by removing administrative waste and profits from our system, single-payer will cost Oregonians less than they currently pay for health care. Indeed, employers will pay less in taxes than they currently pay for health benefits, and patients will pay less in taxes than they currently pay through premiums, deductibles and other cost-sharing.

Oregon has an incredible opportunity in front of us--to change the course of history in our state, and to become the envy of the nation when it comes to health care. I strongly urge the committee to pass SB 704 and get us one step closer to single payer.