

Submitter: Ian Johnson
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Health Care
Measure: SB704

Dear Chair Patterson, Vice Chair Hayden, and members of the Senate Committee on Healthcare, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony. I am a legal worker and homeowner in East Portland.

In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic I fulfilled a lifelong dream of starting my own firm and becoming a small business owner. It wasn't an easy decision to leave a steady but low paying job to go into business for myself. But the expansions to Medicaid eligibility during the pandemic ensured I had access to healthcare while so much else in my life was uncertain. Today I bring home almost twice as much as I did previously, and I am happy to purchase a plan on the market. But with the COVID-19 emergency healthcare access winding down I wonder how many Oregonians will be kept from the success I enjoy because they need reliable access to healthcare.

As a legal worker I work primarily in criminal defense cases. The defendants in my cases are often prescribed mental health medications and have been unable to get their prescriptions for some time. As someone with a college education, a good job and free time figuring out my insurance so I can get a doctor's appointment can still be a stretch at times. To people dealing with homelessness, substance dependence and mental health problems the administrative work of navigating our healthcare system can be impossible. I have seen more than one client get arrested repeatedly as they fall down the ladder of care. As a worker in our criminal justice system I urge you to pass SB 704 to keep our streets safer and help solve one of the root causes of crime.