

March 15, 2023

Delivered electronically

Dear Co-Chairs Campos & Valderrama and committee members:

We are writing as members of the Joint Task Force on the Bridge Health Care Program to urge you to recommend that the Legislature robustly fund implementation of the Bridge Health Care Program (as part of Oregon Health Authority's Health Systems Division).

In its original request budget, OHA sought \$268 million for Bridge Program implementation, including \$130 million that was already appropriated in the 2021-23 budget, but has not been spent because the end of the COVID-19 public-health emergency was delayed. That \$130 million is needed to maintain Oregon Health Plan coverage for members who will not be eligible for OHP after the Public Health Emergency ends, until the Bridge Program is established and they can be transitioned onto that coverage. **We strongly encourage this committee to recommend appropriating at least that amount, and ideally the full amount of OHA's original proposal, for the Bridge Program.** The Bridge Program is essentially a new public health plan, so there is a lot of work to do to roll it out—and roll it out well—from policy and actuarial analysis to engagement with community partners. That work requires resources.

If you haven't reviewed [the recommendations of the Joint Task Force on the Bridge Health Care Program](#), we encourage you to do so. As Task Force members, we can assure you that this Program has been thoroughly vetted by experts from OHA, the Department of Consumer and Business Services, and outside actuaries. It represents an invaluable opportunity to not only preserve the gains in high-quality health-insurance coverage that Oregon has experienced during the public-health emergency, but expand them, bolstering our state's status as a national leader in health coverage. Maybe most importantly for a Ways & Means subcommittee, the Bridge Program will generate a surplus. To get to that point, though, the state needs to make an up-front investment—a bridge to the Bridge, if you will. We hope that you will recommend one.

Sincerely,

Jonathan Frochtzvajg (Cascade AIDS Project)
Antonio Germann (Salud Medical Clinic and Pacific Pediatrics)
Kelsey Heilman (Oregon Law Center)
Sharmaine Johnson-Yarbrough (Wallace Medical Concern)
Keara Rodela (Coalition of Community Clinics)

Cc: Sen. Elizabeth Steiner, Rep. Tawna Sanchez, President Rob Wagner, Speaker Dan Rayfield