

Submitter: Rick Staggenborg MD  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means  
Measure: SB5506

Dear members of Ways and Means, I encourage you to prioritize SB 1089, which would establish a volunteer governance board to complete the work started by the Universal Health Care Task Force in designing a publicly funded system of universal care for Oregon.

While I am disappointed that the Health Committee put forth a proposal for an unpaid Board, I understand their concern for keeping costs down in order to get support in your committee. However, I hope that this does not prove to be penny wise and pound foolish given the investment the state has already made in pursuing exploration of how to provide care for all its citizens, including the RAND and Optumas studies, both of which concluded that it is financially feasible to do so. The latter study, done by specialists in health care reform and using more realistic yet still conservative estimates, concluded that such a system would save nearly a billion dollars in its first year of operation. Among other options, these savings could be used to shore up Oregon's devastated mental health system, which would likely have secondary savings such as reduced incarceration, allowing that money to be spent addressing other issues such as homelessness.

In addition to this common sense economic argument, I would support pursuing the creation of a universal health care system in Oregon based on moral considerations alone. I suspect that I don't need to add to the litany of stories that this committee has already heard about how our broken "system" of access to health care has harmed Oregonians and all Americans. Our state can once more be at the forefront of positive change in the US by taking the simple step of passing SB 1089.