

Submitter: Lee Mercer
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means
Measure: SB5506

Joint Committee on Ways and Means
Re: Support for SB 1089 (formerly SB 704)

Chair Steiner, Vice Chairs Girod, Gomberg, Sanchez, Smith and Members of the Committee,

I am Lee Mercer, member and former Director of Main Street Alliance of Oregon. Main Street Alliance supports the passage of SB 1089, the Universal Healthcare Governing Board Act and I personally would add that key priorities in your funding decisions should be to pass bills promoting health, housing and climate change strategies. These priorities support our survival as a human race.

Main Street Alliance has advocated on policy issues impacting Main Street businesses throughout Oregon for over 10 years. We currently have several thousand "Mom and Pop" type businesses on our statewide list.

In 2012, we began surveying business owners from door to door from Astoria to Ontario and from Ashland to Hermiston. Each year we wrote reports on issues relevant to our membership.

This began during the roll-out of the Affordable Care Act, and we queried business owners on their interest in that program, but also included a question on whether they would support a universal "single payer" type healthcare system. Interestingly, even throughout rural Oregon, where we expected folks to be more conservative, support for a single payer system polled consistently at or above 60% in our surveys. In the same surveys we learned that 85% of these business owners did not provide health insurance for their employees, and many had none for themselves or their families.

Seeing that a majority of small business owners in Oregon supported universal healthcare, Main Street Alliance joined the many organizations statewide advocating for such a system. Over the past 10 years, the legislature moved this process forward by funding the Rand Study and the report this year by the Task Force on Universal Healthcare. Then, when the voters last November passed Measure 111 amending the Oregon Constitution to guarantee healthcare as a fundamental right, Oregon took another step forward towards becoming the first state to create a truly universal healthcare system.

Main Street Alliance encourages this committee to assure the modest funding required under SB 1089 and move the state of Oregon towards healthcare for all.

Lee Mercer

Member, Main Street Alliance Executive Committee in Oregon

Former MSAO Organizer/Director

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