

Submitter: Devon Lawson  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: House Committee On Health Care  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB4038

Chair Nosse and Members of the Committee,

My name is Devon Lawson. I am a 19-year-old resident of Springfield and a student of History and Economics. I am writing to you today not just as a student concerned about my future, but as a young Oregonian who refuses to accept the capitulation of our state government to the medical-industrial complex's blackmail.

I strongly oppose HB 4038.

While the bill is framed as a 10-year "pause" on enforcement, we must call it what it is. It is a repeal in disguise. It is a signal that the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) has blinked in the face of industry pressure. By stripping the state of its only mechanism to discipline health care costs, you are effectively handing a blank check to hospital systems and insurers to extract maximum wealth from Oregon's working families for the next decade.

I urge you to vote NO for the following reasons.

We often hear about the need for fiscal prudence and the dangers of inflation. The Health Care Cost Growth Target was the state's primary tool to check the inflationary appetites of massive health care monopolies. If you pass HB 4038, you are voting to allow health care costs to grow unchecked. Who pays for that growth? Small Businesses who will see their premiums skyrocket, eating into their ability to hire or invest. Taxpayers! I see how limited our state budget is. Every dollar that the state is forced to pay in inflated Medicaid or PEBB/OEBB costs is a dollar stolen from education, infrastructure, or public safety. A 10-year "holiday" from accountability is not a conservative position; it is a fiscally reckless abandonment of oversight that will bankrupt Oregon households.

I know the narrative the hospital lobbyists are selling you. "We can't meet these targets without cutting staff or closing services." As a student of economics, I recognize this for what it is, and that's extortion. The drivers of cost growth in Oregon are not bedside nurses or dental hygienists; they are administrative bloat, executive compensation, and the consolidation of market power. Vice-Chair Nelson, as a nurse and labor advocate, you know that when hospitals cut costs, they rarely start with the C-suite. They start with the floor staff. However, killing the target does not save staffing ratios. It simply frees up more capital for executive bonuses and capital projects. The solution is not to kill the target, but to refine it, to strictly exempt direct

patient care wages while clamping down harder on administrative waste and pharmaceutical gouging. HB 4038 throws the baby out with the bathwater.

I will be roughly 29 years old when this pause expires in 2036. By then, if current trends continue, the cost of health care will have effectively locked my generation out of the ability to afford care, buy homes, or start families.

This bill effectively admits that the state is powerless to regulate the prices of a life-or-death commodity. It validates the idea that private health systems are "too big to regulate."

Chair Nosse, you noted that the Cost Growth Target program probably is not going to make it due to resistance. I ask you, resistance from whom? Not from the patients. Not from the workers. But from the entities that profit from the status quo.

Do not give them this victory. Do not sign a 10-year truce with inflation. Vote NO on HB 4038 and force the industry to come back to the table with a plan that respects the economic reality of Oregonians, not just their own profit margins.

Thank you.