



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

May 13, 2013

Chair Greenlick, Members of the Committee:

Thank you for hearing HB2922. For the record my name is Jennifer Williamson – I represent House District 36, Portland's Westside.

I would like to thank you for taking the time to hear this important issue today. It is critical that the conversation concerning affordable, accessible health care for all Oregonians moves forward.

As the cost of quality health care in Oregon continues to rise, too many in our communities are left without the care they deserve when they need it most. The facts should be disturbing to us all.

Each year, 540 Oregonians die from treatable diseases because they could not access affordable care.

Last year 34,000 Oregonians in 12,000 families endured personal bankruptcies caused by medical crises, and most had health insurance when the medical condition began.

This is unacceptable. We know we can do better – much, much better

There are health care systems around the world and even in our own country providing quality care to more people for less money than we do in Oregon. A single payer system would ensure that all Oregonians, including the sick, the poor, and the unemployed, receive better services at lower costs, without skimping on benefits or provider payments.

The incredible disparities in our current system were recently highlighted in the publication of a federal database of hospital prices across the nation, including those here in Oregon. This data revealed the arbitrary and uneven way in which hospitals determine pricing for procedures, with costs for the same treatment varying by thousands, and sometimes tens of thousands of dollars from state to state.

While Oregon has made great strides and does show hospital costs below the national average, the database provides further proof that we can do more to address the unnecessarily high costs of health care which most heavily burden the un- and underinsured.

Improving this broken system does not require that we spend more, just that we spend smarter. A well-designed single payer model would cost Oregonians and the

government far less than the current system, which consumes nearly 20% of all money spent in our state. It is less fragmented, allowing us to better understand outcomes and manage associated costs.

It takes courage to change a health care system that is decades old, even when that system is leading Oregon to disaster. And it takes courage to create a new health care system that provides for us and our families throughout our lifetimes. However, I believe Oregonians are courageous people and we cannot afford to do anything less.

Thank you again for hearing this bill. I hope we can continue to move toward a system which provides accessible, affordable health care for everyone in our state.