

May 29, 2013

Legislators, 2013 Oregon Legislative Assembly  
John Kitzhaber, MD, Governor, State of Oregon  
Bruce Goldberg, MD, Director, Oregon Health Authority

Dear Lawmakers, Governor Kitzhaber and Director Goldberg:

We respectfully request that the Oregon Health Authority take the next step in health reform by commissioning an analysis of a Basic Health Program in Oregon.

Basic Health, an option under the federal Affordable Care Act, offers the possibility of extending health coverage and quality care to Oregonians who may otherwise go uninsured or be unable to afford needed care — at minimal cost to the state. This promising opportunity ought to be explored.

The potential benefits of a Basic Health Program in Oregon include:

- Providing health coverage to low-income Oregonians — including some legal immigrants — who may not be able to afford insurance through Cover Oregon.
- Improving access to care for low-income Oregonians by lowering out-of-pocket costs below levels in Cover Oregon plans.
- Improving access to care by offering a more comprehensive benefit package than provided through Cover Oregon plans.
- Helping Oregonians keep their doctor when income fluctuates above and below Medicaid eligibility levels.

Basic Health may achieve all of this at little cost to the state, as the federal government would provide substantial funding for the program.

A feasibility study would allow Oregonians to determine whether Basic Health is a good fit for our state. Such a study would, among other things, clarify how many Oregonians who would otherwise go uninsured would receive coverage; how much Oregonians would pay in Basic Health compared to Cover Oregon plans; the impact of Basic Health on Cover Oregon; and what if any costs the state would incur.

Now is a good time for the Oregon Health Authority to study the feasibility of Basic Health. The federal Department of Health and Human Services will issue rules over the coming months for operating state programs. An analysis conducted in the near future would have the benefit of this federal guidance.

We urge you to explore the feasibility of a Basic Health Program, which could further Oregon's current efforts to extend quality health care to all Oregonians.

AARP Oregon  
Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon (APANO)  
CareOregon  
Causa Oregon  
Center for Intercultural Organizing  
Children First for Oregon  
Elders In Action Commission  
Health Care for All-Oregon  
Main Street Alliance of Oregon  
Metropolitan Alliance for Common Good  
Oregon Action  
Oregon Center for Public Policy  
Oregon Foundation for Reproductive Health  
Oregon Latino Health Coalition  
Oregon Law Center  
Oregon Office of Rural Health  
Oregon Primary Care Association  
Oregon Public Health Institute  
OSPIRG  
PCUN  
Portland Jobs with Justice  
NARAL Pro-Choice Oregon  
Q Center  
SEIU Local 49  
SEIU Local 503  
Urban League of Portland  
We Can Do Better