



Quality of life should never depend on age.

June 7, 2013

Honorable Mitch Greenlick
900 Court St. NE, H-493
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Chair Greenlick and the House Committee on Healthcare-

The Elders in Action Commission is a senior advocacy council that advises the City of Portland, Multnomah County, and the Aging and Disability Services Department on elder issues and services. We take great interest in Oregon's older adult community and the services and supports they need to live quality lives, including those in the pre-Medicare ages of 50-64 who have many of the same issues of the older population but a much smaller safety net.

We applaud Oregon's efforts to work toward providing healthcare for all residents, and though we continue to advocate for a Medicare-for-All system, we see the strides that are being made to provide health insurance to many more Oregonians. However, we believe that despite the progress being made with Cover Oregon, the ACA, and increasing OHP, there will still be Oregonians that fall through the cracks of our system. Basic Health could be another tool to provide for those caught in the middle, not poor enough for Medicaid, not old enough for Medicare, and not financially-able to pay all the out-of-pocket costs our current system incurs. We see too many people stuck in this no-man's-land, who use our services every day, to ignore a potential helping hand that could make things better.

The pre-Medicare population we serve is primarily a lower income group of older adults who share the same chronic medical conditions, lack of access to affordable housing, lack adequate transportation, and often times lack access to proper nutrition as do adults in the over 65 years age group. This is a population struggling through an unemployment situation where, if they are over 50 and have been unemployed for six months to a year, they have little hope of ever finding a living wage job again. They are in a sandwich generation where they may be taking care of aging parents and their own children or grandchildren, with very limited access to services to do either. However, this is a demographic nonprofits are starting to focus on, meals programs are popping up with early or late hours for those who can find work, options counseling and budget stretching programs are beginning, and if we can add affordable access to healthcare to serve this tail end of the boomer generation we might just create a real system better equipped for a healthier, less service intensive age wave than we are all bracing for.

In order to better understand the benefits and challenges of implementation of a Basic Health Program here in Oregon, a study is needed to look at the feasibility and potential impacts. CMS expects to have federal rules and regulations in place to allow states to provide Basic Health in 2015. A study undertaken in this interim will allow Oregon to have better information and data to determine if this is a viable option for our state. We urge you to support a feasibility study of an Oregon Basic Health Program.

Thank you,

Steve Weiss

Steve Weiss, Chair

Mission: To assure a vibrant community through the active involvement of older adults.

1411 SW Morrison Street, Suite 290 • Portland, OR 97205-1912

Phone: (503) 235-5474 • Fax: (503) 595-7599 • info@eldersinaction.org •

www.eldersinaction.org