

**Testimony to Senate Healthcare Committee
SB 770-1
Support**

**By: Mary L. Hennrich
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Chairperson Monnes -Anderson and honorable Committee Members, my name is Mary Lou Hennrich and I reside at 7206 SE Salmon St. in Portland. I am a retired nurse who has spent my entire 45+ year career in Oregon, working at Multnomah County Health Department (beginning in 1969 as a public health nurse and ended after 25 years as an Assistant Director, overseeing our clinic system that served 40,000 low income mostly uninsured individuals and families) developing CareOregon with partners OHSU, Multnomah and Clackamas Counties and Community and Migrant Health Centers throughout the state (where I was the founding CEO from 1994-2003) and ending my career at the Oregon Public Health Institute (OPHI) as the Executive Director from 2003-2014. OPHI was instrumental in development and passage of Oregon's law that stopped public schools in Oregon from selling "junk foods" and sugar sweetened beverages to students and establishing menu labeling in chain restaurants as major strategies in the efforts to reduce the obesity epidemic, especially in children.

In these roles, I have seen and experienced the continual skyrocketing costs, inefficiencies, heartbreaks, and tragedies that happen everyday in our current healthcare delivery "non-system" that results in our costs being over twice those of every other nation and yet having our health care outcomes at the bottom of the ranking of these countries! Twice the cost, yet bottom of the health outcome rankings! Serving on this Committee, you are only too aware of this atrocity. My adult children and grandchildren are among the "fortunate" ones having health insurance through their employers, but even so, the "out of pocket" costs to my son and daughter in law were over \$5,000 for a "normal" birth, one day hospital stay, for my newest granddaughter 12 weeks ago.

This is why I am spending my recent retirement years as a board member of Healthcare for All Oregon (HCAO) advocating for a major

change! We know that public opinion strongly supports publicly funded, universal healthcare for ALL, but you and I know well, there are still many unanswered questions and issues to be resolved as we move from “the healthcare house that Jack built” to a universal, efficient, cost effective, comprehensive, high quality healthcare “system.” That’s why we are strongly supporting SB 770-1 and urge you to pass it out of your committee as a critical step in making Oregon the first state to assure publicly funded, universal healthcare for ALL its residents.

As you have heard, SB 770-1 establishes an 18 member Commission to work out the many details needed to move Oregon forward. Without such a Commission having the authority established in SB 770-1, we won’t have enough specific details to inform the legislature and ultimately the Oregon electorate to assure that ALL Oregonians have the quality care they need at a cost they can afford. Bankruptcies based on medical bills, “go fund me” campaigns for medical expenses, individuals and families having to decide between food, housing or prescription drugs and needed medical procedures will become a thing of the past. You have the power to lead us by taking this important step that can ultimately lead us to Healthcare for ALL Oregonians.

Before closing, I just want to share one small example of the “craziness” of the current “multiple payer” system I spent the last nearly two years of my career working on at OPHI.

Oregon’s 34 local health departments give thousands of vaccinations every year, some of them to people insured by Oregon’s multiple insurers, including state sponsored CCO’s. In 2013, only a few insurers and one CCO paid health departments for the immunizations given to the insurer’s members. The others claimed that health departments were not “in their networks” or they required their members to pay the health department “out of pocket” when receiving the vaccine, and then file a claim for reimbursement. These practices discouraged people and their children from receiving the critical vaccines. OPHI was contracted by State Public Health to work on this issue and I spent many months trying to get agreement from the multiple insurers. I saw “up close and personal” the multiple administrative bureaucracies that made this what seemed like should be a “simple” problem take complex, multiple level meetings and what seemed like “two steps forward and one back”

over more than two years. I asked a colleague about the current situation a few weeks ago and was told there are still some insurers not complying and each insurer requires health departments to sign complicated contracts with differing billing procedures, amounts of payment and other administrative complexities. What a waste of resources at a time when we are battling measles and other preventable diseases. As I know you agree, we need to make immunizations easily available without monetary and administrative barriers. This is just one small example of the “administrative waste” in our current “non-system.”

Thank you for your leadership and courage. I and the membership of HCAO stand ready to work together with you as SB 770-1 moves forward.