



## **ONA Testimony on HJR 202**

February 4, 2020

House Committee on Health

Deborah Riddick

Good afternoon Chair Salinas, Vice Chairs Nosse and Hayden, and members of the committee. My name is Deborah Riddick. I am the Director of Government Relations for the Oregon Nurses Association (ONA). We represent 15,000 registered nurses throughout the state. The ONA supports the policy statement advanced in HRJ 202, which would amend Oregon's Constitution establishing obligation of state to ensure every resident of state access to cost-effective, clinically appropriate and affordable health care, in a fiscally responsible way, as determined by ballot at next regular general election. And we applaud the sponsors, Representative Greenlick and Senator Manning Jr. for their consistent commitment to the health and well-being of every Oregonian.

Although research has revealed that social and economic determinants are the leading contributors to poor health and related health outcomes, access to care is recognized as a major contributing factor, as well. According to America's Health Rankings 2018, Oregon was ranked 21<sup>st</sup> in the nation; <https://www.americashealthrankings.org/explore/annual/state/OR>. Two of the metrics that negatively impacted our ranking were health disparities, we were 42<sup>nd</sup>, and high school graduation rates – a social determinant of health, we were 48<sup>th</sup>. However, within this same study, we were 3<sup>rd</sup> in the nation in clinical outcomes and 8<sup>th</sup> in the nation in preventable hospitalizations. What this seemingly contradictory information reveals is that when we are able to provide the care that our residents need, when they need it, the impact is dramatic. HRJ 202, as a value statement, has the potential to provide more of our residents to access essential physical and mental health care services when they need it.

ONA believes that health care is a right, not a privilege and that the health status of our residents drives our collective success and quality of life. If we are not able to support communities in the prevention of infectious disease, we are all at risk of contagion. If we are not moving in a strategic direction to address the health needs of every Oregonian, we risk exacerbating chronic conditions and increasing health care costs due to delayed assessment and treatment. If we are unable to support and maintain a healthy workforce, our economy fails. When individuals lack access to care, we are all vulnerable to the repercussions. The policy commitment outlined in HRJ 202 aligns with ONA's mission to support quality care and healthy communities in the State of Oregon; we hope that you agree.