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# A STRONG VOICE FOR OREGON'S WORKERS

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TO: Chair Prusak and members of the House Health Care Committee

FR: Catie Theisen, Oregon AFL-CIO

RE: Support for HB 2360

The Oregon AFL-CIO represents 300,000 workers across Oregon and is a voice for all workers in the legislative process. As such, we are dedicated to ensuring that all Oregonians have basic protections and affordable, quality health care. This is why we helped pass Cover All Kids to cover 15,000 immigrant children with the Oregon Health Plan, and a number of other immigration policies.

1 in 8 workers in Oregon is an immigrant. These workers disproportionately work in industries including manufacturing, food service, and agriculture which too often do not provide basic health care benefits.<sup>1</sup> Oregon's immigrants are a critical part of our workforce, economy, and communities.

The Oregon Health Plan and CAWEM were designed to provide health care for low-income Oregonians and emergency care for undocumented immigrants to ultimately help contain long-term system costs for Oregonians. However, due to the public charge rule at the federal level, this intent was subverted over the last several years, meaning far too many went without emergency and preventative care.

Although we are optimistic about a change in federal administration on this issue, the last 4 years have proven that protections for low-income immigrants seeking citizenship should be better codified into state law. Too many immigrant workers have been forced into applying for the Oregon Health Plan in order to qualify for hospital charity care. Consequently, their application for OHP potentially put their current or future application for citizenship at risk. This not only had an immediate impact for those individuals at the hospital seeking coverage, but a chilling effect on immigrants seeking care for themselves or their children.

HB 2360 addresses this in Oregon statute by prohibiting hospitals and nonprofit clinics from denying charity care to people who refuse to access the Oregon Health Plan. In Oregon, no one should have to calculate whether getting the care or medicine they need could potentially fatally jeopardize their efforts to become a legal permanent resident or US citizen.

We encourage a yes vote on HB 2360 to prioritize both affordable health care and a pathway for citizenship for thousands of Oregon workers and their families.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/immigrants-oregon>