



March 15, 2021

House Committee on Health Care
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court St. NE, Salem OR 97301

Re: Health Share of Oregon Support for HB2164 - Cover All People

Dear Chair Prusak, Vice Chair Hayden and Members of the House Committee on Health Care:

Thank you for the opportunity to deliver Health Share of Oregon's support for HB2164 – Cover All People. Health Share is a Coordinated Care Organization (CCO) serving approximately 380,000 Oregon Health Plan (OHP) members in Clackamas, Multnomah, and Washington Counties. We are here to advocate on behalf of our members and the communities that we collectively represent.

As Oregon's largest CCO, Health Share recognizes its obligation to equitably serve current members of OHP while simultaneously expanding health care coverage to historically underserved and oppressed populations. To achieve true health equity, it is critical for our state to continue to prioritize investment in the health of low-income individuals by fully funding the Oregon Health Plan for the 2021-2023 biennium. The failure to do so could severely diminish the cooperative progress we have made over the past decade towards achieving the triple-aim of better health, better care, and lower cost. And yet, we know that we cannot stop there. We must find a way to meet existing commitments to current members while also bending the arc of justice beyond its current reach.

Supporting HB2164 is a moral issue for our CCO. We know those disproportionately impacted by an inability to obtain health coverage are largely from communities of color. Over the last year alone, Oregonians of Hispanic/Latino descent have experienced exponentially higher rates of job loss, virus transmission and infection, and are at heightened risk for housing and food insecurity. As such, Health Share understands the need to reduce barriers to coverage for this population and wants to be a part of the solution. We appreciate the thoughtfully iterative approach outlined in HB2164 and fully support the need to build a strong foundation we can expand upon over future biennia.

Moreover, Health Share of Oregon knows from experience that establishing access to quality health care early is critical to enhancing population health and controlling costs. The failure to responsibly expand coverage to individuals who have aged out of Cover All Kids or to their family members without insurance, will likely pose significantly increased costs on our systems of care. Cover All Kids empowered a generation of youth to pursue relationships of trust with physical, behavioral and oral health care providers. It is critical we construct a glide path by which those same individuals – and their parents – obtain and retain relationships with health care professionals. Otherwise, we risk regressing to a place where the emergency department becomes the only valid entry point to receive medical care. The economic and ethical toll of such an outcome is unacceptable in our opinion.

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Last, we encourage Oregon's public officials from all branches of government to work with U.S. President Biden and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to explore options to leverage additional federal funding. Achieving health equity is a collective responsibility that Health Share, and other CCOs, are proud to take on in conjunction with others. Together, we can identify and fill cracks in the system as part of a broader endeavor to guarantee a decent quality of life for all Oregonians. If you have any further questions, do not hesitate to reach out to Health Share's Director of Public Policy, Yoni Kahn, at kahn-jochnowitzky@healthshareoregon.org.

Sincerely,

James Schroeder, CEO
Health Share of Oregon