



March 15, 2021

To: Chair Representative Rachel Prusak, Vice-Chairs Representative Cedric Hayden and Representative Andrea Salinas, and members of the House Committee on Health Care committee

From: Oregon Health Equity Alliance

Re: Testimony in support of HB 2164

Greetings Chair Representative Rachel Prusak, Vice-Chairs Representative Cedric Hayden and Representative Andrea Salinas, and members of the House Committee on Health Care committee. We are writing to you on behalf of the Oregon Health Equity Alliance (OHEA), one of six Regional Health Equity Coalitions (RHECs) across the state, representing Washington, Clackamas, and Multnomah counties, in support of HB 2164, Cover All People.

OHEA is a people-of-color led collaborative that organizes to center and uplift the wisdom of communities of color through racial justice-informed health equity policies and practices. This is a part of the movement to dismantle white supremacy and shift the imbalance of power in our state.

OHEA's commitment to health equity is rooted in the belief that we all benefit when all people in Oregon have access to primary and preventative health care coverage. OHEA's support of HB 2164 Cover all People stems from almost a decade of advocating for comprehensive health care coverage benefits to all. Our 2015 Report, [Mend the Gap: Why Full Coverage Makes Sense for Oregon](#), examined health coverage gaps that prevent Oregonians from accessing the care they need. It found that Oregon's uninsured are disproportionately people of color, LGBT, and low-wage workers.¹ Our advocacy began with Cover All Kids, which extended comprehensive health insurance to Oregon's children without documentation status. We have made great strides in this area and it is time we extend this coverage to adults, knowing healthy parents and adults play a critical role in the wellbeing of their children and our communities.

Under Governor Brown's leadership, 94 percent of Oregonians and 100 percent of children have access to health care. Oregon has made significant progress over the past decade in lowering the state's uninsured rate and while Oregon's 6% uninsured rate is lower than the national average (8.5%), lack of health care coverage persist.² Cover All People would help us to fill that coverage gap. Through this pilot program, we would be able to provide high quality coverage at the same level as the Oregon Health Plan (OHP) for a group of people at or below

¹ Oregon Health Equity Alliance. [Mend the Gap: Why Full Coverage Makes Sense for Oregon](#). 2015.

² U.S. Census Bureau. Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2018. 2019. Available at <https://www.census.gov/library/publications/2019/demo/p60-267.html>.

138% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) regardless of immigration status, as well as pregnant adults up to 190% FPL.

As you know, BIPOC Oregonians are overrepresented in the ranks of essential workers, these communities take much higher health risks when they go to work everyday, especially during the current pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic has illuminated what we have known for decades- that significant racial and economic disparities in healthcare access and outcomes are harming our communities and healthcare coverage is a critical tool for ensuring better care outcomes among communities who are medically underserved. We look forward to the passage of HB 2164, and the steps it takes to ensure all people have access to quality health care. We believe this pilot program is the right step in that direction.

All people in Oregon must have quality, affordable health care, regardless of who they are or where they live. We hope you will support HB 2164 - **Cover All People**. Thank you very much.

Sincerely,
Katie Sawicki, Advocacy and Systems Strategist
Oregon Health Equity Alliance