



March 16, 2021

The Honorable Rachel Prusak  
Chair, House Committee on Health Care  
State Capitol  
Salem, Oregon 97301

RE: House Bill 2164 – expansion of Medicaid coverage

Dear Representative Prusak and members of the committee:

As an organization driven by our Mission to serve the poor and vulnerable, Providence Health & Services fundamentally believes that access to health care is a human right. To this end we have always been strong advocates for sustainable Medicaid funding, and opportunities to expand the Oregon Health Plan to cover all kids. Providence believes it is imperative that the state continue to fully-fund the Oregon Health Plan, without imposing additional financial burden on providers that would limit access, while it continues to expand access to populations included in House Bill 2164.

Our shared goals of improved population health and managing the total cost of care, are rooted in our ability to provide affordable health care coverage to all Oregonians. Initial investments to provide health care coverage will yield long-term savings. Without consistent access and coverage, many people go without care until high-acuity, high-cost services are needed in an emergency department or hospital. When this level of service is required hospitals and their affiliated non-profit clinics respond and provide financial assistance, and yet that is no substitution for affordable insurance coverage.

Providence believes the health care system works best when individuals have access to a primary care provider and preventative services. Every day we see the benefits of early interventions in behavioral health, reduced hospitalizations that come with managed chronic conditions, and the ability to help kids grow and thrive when they have access to immunizations and well-child visits. In our emergency departments, we see the tragic stories of individuals who are categorically ineligible for Medicaid and Medicare services receiving dialysis in the emergency room on a periodic basis because they do not qualify for outpatient dialysis in a community setting. The program presented in House Bill 2164 will begin to expand access to primary care and reduce reliance on the emergency room all leading to better care, provided that the state meets this moment with the resources to continue to fully fund the Oregon Health Plan.

As a state, we have the opportunity to do better. Providence is committed to being a collaborative partner, and working to identify revenue opportunities that increase access, affordability and

quality of health care in Oregon. Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment; we hope the committee will join us in support of House Bill 2164.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lisa Vance". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Lisa Vance  
Chief Executive  
Providence Health & Services