

To: Oregon House Committee on Health Care
RE: HB 3352
Date: March 16, 2021

Chair Prusak, Vice Chair Hayden, and Members of the Committee

My name is Tom Sincic. I am a retired Family Nurse Practitioner. I am also President of Health Care for All Oregon but timing for consideration of this bill did not permit me to represent HCAO today.

I come before you with the assumption that each one of you is here in an effort to improve the health of individuals, families and communities. For 26 years I worked providing health services to school aged children who, along with their entire families, will be positively impacted when this bill becomes law.

Access to care for children improved greatly and use of emergency room services decreased when the Health Care for All Children program was instituted. One such example was when a kid with a potential fracture could be referred to a local orthopedist instead of the ER. However, there remained a significant issue in the lives of these children. I often heard from them about a sick parent who needed care but was delaying care because of the financial burden. These parents, many with treatable illnesses, were unable to attend to their children because of that illness. Sometimes the student needed to stay home from school to attend to a younger sibling. It also resulted in an inability for the parent to go to work, adding additional financial stresses on the family. While at school, the children often worried about their parents and were unable to focus in school. Expanding to the Health Care for All Oregon program would represent a significant step in resolving these issues. Reducing unnecessary emergency room visits and associated costs which we are still paying for is a very likely additional result.

As the members of this committee know, the passage of SB 770 in 2019, put Oregon on a path to universal healthcare under a set of Purposes, Values and Principles. This bill is very much in line with a number of those purposes, values, and principles. While the Task Force on Universal Health is busy designing the program that will eventually serve everyone residing in Oregon, some talk about intermediate steps. Some proposals are very incremental and call for costly new administrative structures to implement. This bill uses the existing Medicaid program to increase access and advance equity. It also represents a giant leap for these families.

I strongly encourage this Committee to advance health care for all with the passage of HB 3352.

Sincerely,

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