

To: House Health Care Committee
From: Alicia Temple, Oregon Law Center
Date: March 15, 2021
Re: HB 2164 -3 and HB 3352, Cover All People

Chair Prusak and members of the committee:

On behalf of the Oregon Law Center (OLC), I respectfully request your support for Cover All People, HB 2164 -3 and HB 3352.

OLC is a non-profit organization that provides free legal help to people struggling to make ends meet. Our mission is to achieve justice for low-income communities in Oregon by providing a full range of the highest quality civil legal services. We advocate for our clients and for the services and programs that help them to overcome poverty. Access to healthcare and issues of health equity are at the forefront of the needs of our clients. While many of our clients are covered by OHP, some are barred from being eligible due to their immigration status. This is a significant gap in our state's safety-net and is a problem we can solve.

Oregon has done a lot of work to increase availability of healthcare insurance for individuals but we still have steps to take. Cover All Kids has been a successful program that brought not just increased health coverage but increased health outcomes to children in Oregon. Providing access to those children after they turn 18, and to other adults who would qualify for OHP if not for their immigration status, will have a tremendous positive impact on the health of our communities.

OLC sees clients all the time who would benefit from Cover all People. CAWEM coverage is limited and inadequate for many of needs of our clients. For example, a high priority coverage issue that we see across the state in dialysis. It is one of the most common health questions we get from clients who are covered only by CAWEM, and a significant concern for health and quality of life. Creating a Cover All People program would allow low-income Oregonians who would qualify for OHP but for immigration status to get the care they need.

The question of creating a Cover All People program is rooted in the very real needs in the community, and is also one of health equity in our state. This past year has made it glaring obvious that we have unequal access to health care and safety in our communities. The Latinx community makes up 13% of the population but counts for at least 26% of Oregon's COVID cases. Overrepresented in the ranks of essential workers, these taxpayers take on the burden of high health risks to keep our economy strong, especially during the current pandemic.

We understand that before this committee is the question of the scale of the expansion, but to OLC and our clients there is one clear answer: Now is the time to create a Cover All People program that covers all adults who need it and would qualify for OHP, if not for immigration status. OLC urges your support for HB 3352 and HB 2164 -3.