



March 16, 2021

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

**Re: House Bill 2164 - Cover All People**

Chair Prusak, vice-chair Hayden, vice-chair Salinas, and members of the committee –

My name is Bahaa Wanly. I am the chief operating officer and chief inclusion, equity and diversity officer at Salem Health. Salem Health is a health system in the mid-Willamette valley, and our mission is to improve the health and well-being of the communities we serve. I'd like to tell you why Salem Health supports HB 2164 and the goals of Cover All People.

Salem Health believes that everyone should have access to affordable health care. Race, ethnicity, income level or immigration status should never affect someone's ability to access insurance or improve their health. Unfortunately, we know that health disparities exist, and they often correlate to race, ethnicity or immigration status. And while COVID has highlighted these disparities in new ways, these discrepancies are not new.

Building equity in health care is important to Salem Health because it is right thing to do and because it is significant to the communities we serve. In fact, more than one quarter of Marion County, part of our primary service area, is Latino. We recognize that many in these communities have not had the same access to care as others or experienced the same health outcomes. Cover All People is an important part of addressing that problem.

Patients who have access to consistent, holistic health care services experience better health outcomes because they have regular access to primary and preventative care. Health plan coverage is the best mechanism for providing individuals with access to these services. It is also worth noting that insurance coverage reduces costs to the system as a whole over the long run, treating illness early before it becomes chronic disease.

We believe providing patients with access to quality health care coverage is the right thing to do. This begins with a fully funded Medicaid program, which has been a flagship of Oregon health care policy and a foundational strategy in the fight against health care inequity. Oregon's Medicaid program serves the underserved, and provides coverage to those who wouldn't otherwise have access. However, some underserved Oregonians aren't eligible for Medicaid. Cover All People takes Oregon's Medicaid program another step, extending coverage to others who do not qualify under the traditional limits of Medicaid.

Salem Health urges your consideration and support of HB 2164.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bahaa Wanly", written in a cursive style.

Bahaa Wanly  
Chief operations officer  
Chief inclusion, equity and diversity officer  
Salem Health