



March 18, 2020

Dear Chair Prusak, Co-Chairs Salinas and Hayden, and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of NARAL Pro-Choice Oregon, we would like to share our support for HB 2164, the Cover All People pilot program and HB 3352, which would transition the Health Care for All Oregon Children into the Health Care for All Oregon program and expand eligibility to adults who would qualify for Medicaid-funded state medical assistance program or for federal premium tax credits but for their immigration status.

At NARAL Pro-Choice Oregon, our advocacy is centered on defending and expanding access to the full spectrum of reproductive health care, especially for those who most often face barriers. We believe we must take an equity-focused approach to increasing access to quality, culturally-informed health care. We support efforts to improve health equity in our state, which we believe must be intentionally focused on the health disparities experienced by Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and other communities, including higher instances of COVID-19, and complications and/or with regard to pregnancy and birth outcomes. We support critical intersectional policies because we know that people also need to access a living wage job and other programs and resources needed to raise a family in a healthy and safe environment. **We are honored to support HB 3352 and HB 2164 as the natural continuation of work we began in 2017, with the Passage of Health Kids and the Reproductive Health Equity Act, which expanded access to critical health care coverage for children and people who could become pregnant in Oregon, regardless of immigration of status.**

**Cover All People and Health Care for All Oregon are innovative and inclusive policies and reflect the core values we hold in Oregon: that healthcare is a human right and should be available and accessible to everyone in our state.** The pilot program in HB 2164 would provide health care coverage to medically underserved people including undocumented adults, DACA recipients, legal permanent residents and other young adults who would otherwise age out of Cover All Kids health coverage. Oregonians under 138% (190% for pregnant women) of the poverty level would be eligible to enroll. Passage of HB 3352 would expand access for all adults that would otherwise qualify for Medicaid-funded health care services or for federal premium tax credits, but are excluded due to their immigration status.

The expansion of Health Care for All Oregon, and/or the Cover All People pilot would expand access to immigration communities who are most likely to experience barriers to receiving timely and preventative healthcare. These policies will help support healthy adults as individuals, as well as healthy communities. The bills will also help reduce healthcare costs borne by taxpayers by extending authority to cover a critical population.

BIPOC and Latinx Oregonians are the backbone of our economy. Overrepresented in the ranks of essential workers, these taxpayers take much higher health risks to keep our economy strong, especially during the current pandemic. Expanded healthcare access is linked to obtaining and maintaining employment, which benefits the economy in general. Health

insurance coverage also reduces individual debt (medical and non-health-related), allowing individuals to participate in and stimulate our economy.

Passage of these policies would promote the end of historical racist and discriminatory health gaps within immigrant and/or communities of color, however, we also recognize that more work must be done. In order to improve health outcomes for those who currently experience the greatest disparities (Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color), additional and adequate funding must be available for cultural-informed communication tools available in all languages, community outreach from trusted community-based partners, and culturally-informed health care services and a workforce of health care providers who reflect the diversity of the communities they serve. These are crucial investments needed to ensure that everyone who qualifies for public health care plans can enroll and will fully utilize the services they have available to them. While the majority of Black Oregonians have some form of health insurance coverage, many experience illness and infirmity at extremely high rates and have lower life expectancy than other racial and ethnic groups.<sup>1</sup> In order to improve health outcomes for all communities, most impacted populations must be aware of essential services available to them and hear about these services from trusted sources, if we want to see more people gain access and overcome barriers within our healthcare system.

As you know, being uninsured disproportionately affects rural Oregonians, communities of color, and low-wage working families. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted significant racial and economic disparities in healthcare access and outcomes. Healthcare coverage is a tool to help ensure better care outcomes among communities who are medically underserved. In geographic locations reporting demographic data, communities of color are bearing a disproportionate burden of COVID-19, and are being infected - and dying - at a higher rate compared to the white population.

We hope you will support HB 2164 and HB 3352 and help reverse the trends outlined above.

Sincerely,

Jeanine Morales  
Deputy Director  
NARAL Pro-Choice Oregon

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://tcf.org/content/report/racism-inequality-health-care-african-americans/>