

March 17, 2021
Oregon Senate Rules Committee

Re: Support of SB 261, SB 262, SJR 3, and SJR 4

Submitted online

Dear Senate Rules Committee:

On behalf of Project Access NOW, I am writing to ask you to take action on the package of bills that encourages legislators to stay at the table and engage in democratic debate on the essential issues facing our state. PANOW is a non-profit in the tri-county area with a mission to improve our communities' health and well-being by creating access to care, services, and resources for those most in need. We offer our community a suite of programs that promote access to care and social services, regardless of an individual's insurance status or type. Last year alone we moved more than 200 clients from donated care to insurance, filled 17,118 low-cost prescriptions totaling \$2,705,778 in savings for low-income patients, and enrolled 7,556 individuals in health coverage. Across all programs, our clients are largely low-income, from immigrant populations, non English-speaking, and/or undocumented.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic hit in spring 2020, PANOW has continued to be at the frontlines of an evolving response. As an organization that works with multiple Oregon health care providers, we are a key point of connection between medical providers, community members, government agencies, health care insurers, and others to identify and fill gaps in service and care. We have seen how the pandemic, as well as wildfires, have impacted the lives of many communities, particularly those who reflect the diverse clients we work with every day. The health and wellbeing of our communities is threatened when our legislature is unable to explore policy impact, debate budget implications, and ultimately vote on how and what we resource across the state.

We do not see this as partisan; while the most recent incidents have been by Republicans, in the past Democrats have utilized similar tactics, ultimately jeopardizing Oregon's ability to continue being a leading state in providing opportunities for all to thrive. I urge you to act favorably on the issue, with SB 261, SB 262, SJR 3, and SJR 4 being possible tools to ensure all elected officials are held accountable to doing the difficult work on behalf of the people of our state.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment,

Carly Hood-Ronick MPA, MPH
Executive Director