



Service Employees International Union – Oregon State Council
6401 SE Foster ▪ Portland, OR 97206

April 1, 2021

Dear Chair Prusak and Members of the Committee,

For the record, my name is Katie Shriver, and I represent the SEIU Oregon State Council. SEIU is an 85,000 member union in Oregon and SW Washington and a 2 million member union nationally. I am testifying in support of efforts to create a public option that expands healthcare coverage to Oregonians.

SEIU is a diverse union representing health care workers, property services workers, homecare and personal support workers, nursing home and nonprofit workers, janitors, public workers, and many others. About sixty percent of our members earn less than \$40,000/year, and SEIU members communicate in five different languages. SEIU has been working on expanding access to quality and affordable health care for our members and their families for over 50 years. Access to quality, affordable health care is a human right, as the COVID pandemic has highlighted. And expanding access helps make sure people can seek health care when they need to rather than waiting for an emergency.

SEIU supports many health care expansion efforts. In the past, we have supported improving access to Medicaid through Cover All Kids, the Basic Health Program, and Medicaid buy-in. We currently support Cover All People so that everyone who meets Medicaid eligibility is able to get coverage. And we advocate for universal health care through a single payer system which reduces administrative complexity and overhead while ensuring every person has access to care. Among these efforts, we strongly support developing and offering a public option health plan, which could play an important role in offering coverage for people who today are among the six percent of Oregonians who do not have health insurance.

Public option plans vary and require work to ensure that they successfully reduce costs enough to successfully meet the needs of target populations. Efforts to develop a public option sometimes seek to leverage the state's investments in health care for public employees, by creating a larger purchasing block and/or as a tool to encourage provider and carrier participation. We support wise use of this leverage as long as it does not undermine the ability of the state to maintain quality benefits for public employees while

reining in cost growth, in alignment with efforts in Medicaid and commercial insurance markets.

HB 2010, as amended, thoughtfully outlines a study that could position Oregon to take advantage of federal incentives to make public option plans more accessible. HB 3381 would give the state the opportunity to design a public option plan and take advantage of the state's full purchasing power. However, we are concerned that the timelines included in HB 3381 are too aggressive and could create unintended consequences; with this in mind, we would support asking the state to design a public option as outlined in Section 1 of the bill and report back. Then the Legislature could consider a bill in a future session allowing the State to move forward with a procurement based on the design. With these changes, we support both HB 2010 and HB 3381.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of efforts to create a public option plan for Oregon.