

Access to appropriate and affordable healthcare should be a right to all people. I am a healthcare provider in a rural part of Eastern Oregon, I have seen the impact that expansion of access to care means for people in our community. When the Affordable Health Care Act and Oregon's Medicaid expansion first went into effect, I began seeing people that had put off taking care of themselves for many years. As a result, many had medical issues that would have been very small and easy to resolve become advanced disease processes that resulted in costly surgery and often time irreparable damage that will result in costly care in the years to come. There is one of many cases that comes to mind that I would like to share with you. A woman who had been uninsured for many years that was suffering from a hearing loss that was getting worse. She thought she needed hearing aids and because of cost she didn't seek medical care. By the time I saw her she had an advanced case of cholesteatoma (this is a growth in the middle ear space that is easy to resolve when caught and treated early, when left untreated can result in death). Her cholesteatoma had eaten through her middle ear space moving into her inner ear space and was encroaching on her brain. She was subsequently urgently referred into surgery that saved her life but was very costly and she was left with permanent disfigurement of her face and a severe hearing loss. It shouldn't be like this, fear of cost should not prevent people from having access into health care. The end result is economically favorable and morally responsible. It is a no brainer from both a conservative and liberal perspective. Failure to further ensure accessible, affordable, and clinically appropriate health care for our entire population-not just people with employer based health care or people meeting low income criteria, but everyone.