

Hello ladies and gentlemen of the committee, and thank you for giving us this opportunity.

I strongly support expanding the state's healthcare system to allow all residents to have access to affordable health care, and I would encourage members of the committee to reach across state lines to our fellow residents of Washington and California to urge them to do the same. A West Coast healthcare coalition would allow tens of millions of Americans to have much-needed access to healthcare. It would help address two of the largest threats to our well-being: Medical debt, and access to affordable care.

I have personally witnessed friends and family driven into homelessness, starvation, poverty, and death due to not being able to afford medical treatment or prescription drugs. I have watched, helplessly as friends have fallen ill, gotten fired for missing too much work due to health issues, lost their healthcare coverage due to job loss, and been unable to afford the care they needed, only to be forced from their home because they had to decide between paying rent, or paying for their life-saving prescription medication. I have watched friends and family wither away to husks of their former selves working jobs they hate because they have a medical condition, and if they leave, they will lose their healthcare coverage and risk becoming uninsurable. I have read the horribly depressing stories of people who have done all the right things: worked hard, saved money, planned for the future, and put every possible cent into savings, HSA, and retirement plans, only to have a serious medical emergency wipe all of it out and send them spiraling into debt. It is unconscionable to have people forced out of work due to a pandemic, be forced to give up their employer-sponsored healthcare coverage DURING A PANDEMIC!

No one should have to choose between paying for food and rent, or paying for necessary prescription medication. This is precisely the kind of choice hundreds if not thousands of Oregonians are forced to make because of our current healthcare system. It is a horribly broken system, where insurers, who have never met the people who they insure, can overrule doctors and deny coverage with nothing more than a few keystrokes. Oregonians deserve better. Oregonians deserve access to affordable healthcare.

Thank you for your time.