

May 6, 2021

To: Chair Prusak and Members of the House Committee on Health Care
From: Morgan Beltz, OBI
RE: OBI Testimony on SJR 12

Chair Prusak and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on this important issue for Oregon Business & Industry (OBI). OBI is Oregon's largest and most comprehensive business association representing approximately 1,600 businesses that employ more than 250,000 Oregonians. We support efforts to make health care more affordable and accessible for all Oregonians, however, we believe Senate Joint Resolution 12 could severely complicate the progress already being made in our state.

Oregon has led the nation in reforming our health care system, work that is continuing with the Health Care Cost Growth Target, transitioning to value-based payment agreements, and the Universal Health Care Task Force. The Legislature is also considering passing a Public Option study bill to further examine how to make health care even more accessible and affordable for all Oregonians. We urge the committee to let this ongoing work develop as intended, rather than pass a sweeping constitutional amendment that will certainly cause disruption to this progress.

We are also concerned that SJR 12 could lead to complex and costly litigation. Establishing access to cost-effective, clinically appropriate, and affordable health care as a constitutional right is not a simple policy change. These terms are not well-defined in the resolution, and should voters pass it in the next election, the Legislature will need to divert vast resources to implement it. The burden will fall on the state and Legislature to define each of these components and identify when a violation has occurred. The cost implications are also astronomical because it will be the state's responsibility to cover costs associated with ensuring access and delivery of health care, not to mention that the Legislature will then need to balance other key public priorities like education and public safety with existing dollars.

While we appreciate the intent behind this bill and understand that it would be referred to voters, the unintended consequences, and implications to not just the entire health care system in Oregon but other state-funded agencies are not considered in this approach. We strongly urge you to allow the myriad processes already underway to reach their conclusions before taking this sweeping action.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this critical issue.

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