



May 6, 2021

Testimony to the Senate Committee on Health Care in Support of SJR 12

Dear Chair Prusak, Vice-Chair Hayden, Vice-Chair Salinas, and Members of the Committee,

For the record, my name is Mike Powers, and I am President of SEIU Local 503. I'm also honored to be speaking today on behalf of SEIU 49.

SEIU represents 85,000 working Oregonians, and around 2 million workers throughout the United States. Our members include janitors, health care workers, care providers, hospital workers, airport workers, security workers, public workers, and more. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of SJR 12.

Our mission is to give our members a voice where they work. We work to achieve a higher standard of living for our members, and all working Oregonians. One of our highest priorities is ensuring high quality health care for every Oregonian. We specifically focus on eliminating racial disparities in health outcomes and creating a health care system that works for all of us, no matter what we look like or where we live, including BIPOC communities, women, LGBTQ+ communities, immigrants, rural, and low income people.

We are proud of our work with you, the Governor, and the people of this great state to expand access to health care. More work remains. An estimated 6% of Oregonians do not have health insurance, and many more are underinsured.

The COVID pandemic has made the importance of access to healthcare even more clear. The pandemic has disproportionately affected Black, brown, and indigenous Oregonians.

For example, the uninsurance rate of Latinx Oregonians is 50% higher than the general population - 12% compared to 6%. Further, Latinx Oregonians are 13% of the population but have suffered 26% of the COVID cases, and new research shows they have the lowest vaccination rate in the state. During the COVID pandemic, this has played out with more people getting sick, more people dying, and more families being devastated.

I believe we all agree that these inequities and loss of life are unacceptable.

One solution is the HOPE Amendment, SJR 12. This measure proposes an amendment to the Oregon Constitution establishing the obligation of the state to ensure that every resident has cost-effective, clinically appropriate, and affordable health care. This is an opportunity for Oregon to again lead the country in improving the accessibility and affordability of healthcare. Let's send this amendment to Oregon voters in 2022 and

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allow Oregonians to affirm that high quality, affordable healthcare is a human right for all.

I urge your yes vote on this measure. Thank you for your consideration.

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