

Testimony to Senate Committee on Healthcare
February 17, 2021
Regarding SB 428
By: Antonio Germann, MD MPH

Chair Patterson, Vice Chair Linthicum and members of the Committee, my name is Antonio Germann and I am a resident of West Linn, Oregon and community member as a rural family doctor and clinical medical director of Salud Medical Clinic in Woodburn, Oregon.

I strongly support passage of SB 428 as this bill is necessary to complete the investigation and research necessary for its predecessor SB 770, which is VITAL to the health and future of Oregonians.

The legislature in the prior session has already debated the merits of the work of SB 770.

SB 428 has only one purpose: it will allow the continuation and successful completion of the essential work currently underway by the Joint Task Force on Universal Healthcare. It will forward the timeline for the Task Force to complete its work and report that work to you and your Oregon Legislative colleagues during the 2022 Legislative Session, rather than the current timeline to report during the current 2021 session.

This work was initiated by the passage of SB 770 in 2019. The Task Force is led by two outstanding Oregon Healthcare leaders, Drs. Bruce Goldberg and Ed Junkins and is filled with an extraordinary group of voting members who are knowledgeable and experienced health, equity, and justice community leaders from throughout the state. Other legislative and executive branch leaders are also contributing, but non-voting members.

My clinic system has been disrupted significantly by the COVID-19 pandemic and so has the incredible work of the Joint Task Force on Universal Healthcare for our fellow Oregonians. The impact being addressed by SB 428 is one that delayed beginning the Task Force's work as planned. The confirmation of Task Force Members and then the official first TF meetings were delayed by several months. The meetings have also been required to be virtual and have made it difficult for many interested and potentially impacted Oregonians to interact and give valuable input to members of the Task Force.

In person regional meetings to gather consumer input from throughout the state have not been possible. The Task Force must receive ample time to complete its work and engage the important stakeholders and community members.

The intent of SB 428 is quite simple. It will allow successful completion of the vital, albeit complicated work, of restructuring Oregon's healthcare system to assure better care, to more people for less cost. If the Task Force has to comply with the original SB 770 timeline and present its final report to the 2021 Legislature, many of the critical details of eligibility, benefits to be included, changes in payment mechanisms, e.g. taxes, and myriad other essential details will not have been completely designed and vetted. Because of circumstances completely out of our control, the original timeline is simply TOO SHORT!

We all can agree that the potential in improving, yet restructuring our healthcare will take time and a valiant effort by the task force. We need to ensure they can address all these necessary elements to assure equity, justice, quality healthcare and ultimately HEALTH to ALL Oregonians. We can support them by guaranteeing the prior allocated and adequate time and resources that will be assured by passage of SB 428.

Let's continue to work together to ensure: Better care to more people for less money! Everybody In—Nobody out! Thank you for your consideration of SB 428 and its speedy passage out of your committee.

Sincerely,

Antonio Germann, MD MPH