

My name is Valdez Bravo. An Oregon native of LatinX and Standing Rock Sioux descent, I was born at Oregon Health & Sciences University (OHSU) in 1977 but grew up in Salem.

I am writing in support of SB 428 from the perspective of a healthcare professional with 25 years of experience, a Fellow in the American College of Healthcare Executives, and as Vice President of Health Care for All Oregon (HCAO).?

Three weeks out of high school I joined the U.S. Army. I was fortunate enough to enlist as a Medical Equipment Repairman, working in Army hospitals for a little over eight years in the U.S., Germany, and with the 48th Combat Support Hospital in Afghanistan as part of Operation Enduring Freedom.

Following my Honorable Discharge from the Army in 2003, I went to work at OHSU for six months before joining the Department of Veterans Health Administration in May 2004. It was an honor to serve my fellow Veterans while proudly continuing my federal service as a public servant. Since then I have served in a variety of roles of increasing responsibility, ranging from Biomedical Engineering Supervisor and Chief to Lean Healthcare Transformational Coach to Primary Care Administrator. I now serve as the Chief Operating Officer of a VA in Southern Oregon. Like millions of other Veterans across America, I proudly get my care, "the best care anywhere," from the VA.

Every day I see the benefits of a government-funded health care delivery system which has taken the profit out of the business of delivering care. When I am recruiting providers to come work for the VA, I tell them that they will no longer have to argue and fight with insurance companies to get their patients the care they need. No longer will providers see their patients suffer, go without, decline, or die because of their inability to pay. This is a big draw and a major reason that providers and nurses loves working for the VA. They don't have to fight with insurance companies and other middlemen to get their patients the clinically indicated care their patients need.

Staff at the VA are able to advocate for the care their patients need because the organization's mission is not rooted in a profit motive but in a people motive: a motive to do what's right by the patient based on clinical Indication rather than what the patient can afford or what an insurance company will cover. In a highly fragmented U.S. health care "system" that routinely seeks to make a buck off the sick and dying, the type of care delivered by the VA provides a crystal clear clarity rooted in science, evidence-based medicine, and the benevolence that so many selfless practitioners find refreshing - and a reminder of why they were drawn to medicine in the first place.

While there are many possible models of what a publicly-funded, universal health care system could look like, simply bringing all Oregonians under one centralized system of coverage, delivery, and payment would bend the cost curve while expanding access.

I imagine a world where every Oregonian has this care. Imagine a world where EVERYONE YOU NOW - your friends, your family, your neighbor, your coworker, everyone in your community had access to the care they needed when they get sick.

I believe health care is a human right. I believe everyone should be able to access the care they need regardless of their age, race, employment status, military service, or ability to pay.

And that is why - as a health care leader, as Vice President of HCAO, and as a proud Oregonian, I encourage the Senate to authorize the extension of this Task Force, so that they may continue to do the hard work needed to listen to community input and further hone ideas related to the creation, development, and planning for publicly-funded, universal health care here in Oregon that would cover us all.

Thank you so much for listening.

Respectfully,

Valdez G. Bravo, FACHE
US Army (1995-2003, OEF)
Vice President of Health Care for All Oregon