



Date: February 9, 2022
To: House Committee on Health Care
From: Tyler Cox, RN
Testimony in Support of HB 4035

Chair Prusak, Vice-Chairs Hayden and Salinas, and members of the committee:

My name is Tyler Cox, I am a nurse and member of Oregon Nurses Association and its Cabinet on Health Policy. Our Cabinet and organization — which represents 15,000 nurses and nurse practitioners — want to see Oregon adopt a public option. In that vein, we urge Oregon’s transition to a state-based marketplace, as HB 4035 sets forth — an SBM being prerequisite to getting to a public option.

A public option is an important policy goal due to what it would mean for an overall cost-burdened public, being particularly helpful to those above the income thresholds to be on OHP but for whom private healthcare is still too costly. I’m pleased the legislature and OHA have been working on this issue, and pleased there’s a compelling plan for a public option released by OHA a month ago. The OHA implementation plan is a framework for a public option that could be chosen by Oregonians beginning in 2025. We should be assertively walking this path, so that patients and consumers in 2025, the soonest possible year, are afforded more opportunity, and frankly, economic justice.

I’m an ICU nurse. I see health, in a respect, when it’s at its worst. Our healthcare system has a lot of gaps. Many fall into those gaps. I do a lot of work in my free time with those populations that don’t have available or affordable healthcare: economically disadvantaged people, those experiencing houselessness or struggling with mental health, and immigrants.

My biggest barrier to connecting patients to have their medical needs met is that they don’t have the money to afford insurance so they don’t seek care. We need people covered — all types of people in all types of circumstances. I need it so that when I provide medical advice as a nurse, the biggest barrier to my patients’ seeking care is already addressed.

HB 4035 — making us a state-based marketplace with an eye toward improving the exchange and improving coverage in the coming years — is step the legislature can take right now to live up to this and do right by those patients. I support the coverage improvements to result from the bill’s Medicaid redetermination plan as well. Thank you for the opportunity to testify and I hope you join me in seeing the necessary role for this bill this session.