

Submitter: Richard Bruno
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Health Care
Measure: HB4035

Chair Prusak, vice-chairs Hayden and Salinas, and the committee members,

I'm the Senior Medical Director of Primary Care at Central City Concern in Portland, and I'm grateful for the opportunity to share some thoughts from the perspective of a practicing family physician in support of Oregon pursuing a public option in the near future as we strive for universal healthcare for all Oregonians.

This legislation is a critical step toward that goal. An Oregon public option would have the power to address some of the most pressing challenges I see as a physician. I see every day how the high cost of unaffordable health care is the single most common barrier to individual medical care and to public health. When people delay care, they can get sicker, and sometimes suffer life-threatening complications.

Access to health care when people need it, not only when they can afford it, can make the difference between life and death. One fall a few years ago, I saw a grandmother who could not afford health insurance but did not qualify for subsidies. She ended up in the emergency room with blood sugars through the roof, because she had to buy the 4 grandchildren who live with her new clothes for the school year and couldn't afford her insulin that month. She spent days in the hospital on an insulin drip, at a cost of thousands of dollars a day, for something that could have been prevented if we had a public option.

We would have an opportunity to act proactively and provide health care plans that are more affordable and more comprehensive to meet more people's needs. In this respect, the current federal marketplace, [healthcare.gov](https://www.healthcare.gov), has limitations. While the federal marketplace works well for some cases, we now have the chance to expand the health care horizon so more people have more choices that fit their budget, without compromising on the quality of their health care.

A state-based marketplace can help achieve the goals of low cost-sharing and comprehensive benefits for my patients and so many others across Oregon, especially those in under-resourced communities. A state-based marketplace can help Oregon achieve greater health equity and fairness, while containing costs at a time when insurance premiums and out-of-pocket expenses continue to increase. As Mr Vandehey mentioned in his presentation, we are at 4.6% uninsured rate in Oregon, but there are still hundreds of thousands of Oregonians who are not covered, which may increase dramatically at the end of the Public Health Emergency. Universal healthcare for everyone in our state should be our goal.

Thank you for your work to make health care more affordable for our fellow Oregonians and my patients, and thank you for the opportunity to share my thoughts.

Richard Bruno, MD
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