



February 18, 2022

TO: House Rules Committee  
FR: Maribeth Guarino, Health Care Advocate, Oregon State Public Interest Research Group (OSPIRG)  
RE: On HB 4035 A and a Public Health Insurance Option

OSPIRG is a consumer advocacy group with members across the state working towards a healthier, safer world for all of us. We are supportive of a public health insurance option and would like to see the development of a bridge plan, as laid out in HB 4035, incorporated into the broader conversation about a public option and lowering health care costs for all Oregonians.

We know that the task force charged with developing a bridge plan has a limited amount of time to propose recommendations for the redetermination process. As we try to keep Oregonians from losing health insurance coverage, we must use every resource to create the best product possible in the time available. In order to see this task force succeed, the composition of the task force should be expanded to include consumer advocates and providers that serve uninsured populations. The task force should also consider how best to capture and use federal dollars to offer a high-quality, low-cost plan, ideally through a 1332 waiver. We understand that discussions with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid are ongoing, but believe that the 1332 provides the most flexibility for this bridge plan.

We appreciate that the imminence of the end of the public health emergency puts pressure on Oregon to get the redetermination process right. We also know that Oregon has done a lot in recent years to promote good health policy with initiatives like the health care cost growth target and payment reforms. We need long-lasting solutions, not just bandaids, and we should be striving for this bridge program to be the best possible product it can be so it can help build larger reforms once these immediate concerns have passed.

We urge this committee and the Legislature to ensure that the bridge program considers the broader context of health policy reform in Oregon and is equipped with the tools and people to do the work necessary over the next few months. Providing a high-quality, low-cost health plan for Oregonians between 139-200% of FPL is a good first step to providing a public option for all Oregonians.