

February 6, 2023

Paxton Rothwell  
Portland, OR 97212

Oregon Senate Committee on Health Care  
RE: Support SB 704

Dear Chair Patterson, Vice-Chair Hayden, and other members of the Committee,

My name is Paxton Rothwell and I live in Northeast Portland. I am delighted that the voters supported the amendment to Oregon's constitution that establishes healthcare as a fundamental right. Implementing universal healthcare in Oregon in the near term is something that could help many Oregonians, including myself.

For the past two years I have been working through a career transition. It is an extremely daunting process that's made even worse because healthcare is tied to steady employment. After I left my job in engineering, I suddenly found myself without any health, dental, or vision insurance. I was able to secure insurance through OHP after being under-employed for six months. Though this insurance helped me feel comfortable that if I had an emergency I would not go bankrupt, I was still not able to afford typical appointments due to an extremely high deductible.

Even if they are miserable, like I was at my career-oriented job, many people do not take the leap to change careers for the better because they don't want to lose insurance. Health insurance tied to employment effectively keeps people chained to jobs. This is an unfair reality that many Oregonians face daily.

Universal health care would change that pressure. Oregonians would know that their health is covered even if they change jobs. It would have helped me during this career transition. Universal health care could help lower the cost of health care too. By bargaining from a singular entity, the State could use its power to set uniform, and fair, prices for medical, dental, and vision treatments.

Typical insurance has also kept me barred from accessing affordable mental health care. When I was bogged down by mental health issues a few years ago, I found out that my insurance did

not cover visits to the therapist I had built rapport with. Universal health care would open up treatment options that many Oregonians are barred from accessing today - including mental health care. Seeing a therapist helped me change my entire outlook on life. I stopped unconsciously choosing to do activities that hurt my life. I believe many Oregonians would benefit from more access to all types of health care.

Please support SB 704. Please work to create a universal health care system in Oregon that works for all Oregonians. A fair health care future relies on your dedicated work.

Sincerely,  
Paxton Rothwell  
PCP to HD-43