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On Behalf Of:  
Committee: Senate Committee On Health Care  
Measure: SB704

My life has changed for the better in the past few years with access to OHP. I have been able to receive consistent, continuous mental health care for the first time in my life, dental care for the first time in my adult life, and have a primary care doctor and team of medical professionals who support my well being every step of the way.

I was raised in a different state with a very different culture concerning preventative mental healthcare. Mental health was not really an option or even offered to me as an adolescent even though I particularly could have benefited from it. Having now benefited from the care that OHP provides, I have become an advocate for many others to utilize their mental health benefits as much as possible regardless of the type of insurance coverage they have, because some care is better than no care. However, a consistent obstacle for insured and uninsured people in my community is economic resources. Oregonians cannot easily afford even the basic amount of preventative mental health, or the allotted sessions covered by their insurance would be useful only for acute crises, rather than consistent ongoing care.

Another consistent obstacle for patients is the amount of self advocacy required in healthcare settings. Many people in my community have been uninsured for most of their lives and lack the skills required to navigate the current healthcare system successfully. The people around me who receive the best care have had to work hard to get it; switching coverage and doctors, and continuously advocating for the care they need. For someone who's never had coverage, the amount of self advocacy required to utilize it well can be a great hindrance with the existing system.

I have been fortunate to have access to OHP and am not looking forward to the day my OHP coverage drops. I know the quality of my care will diminish the moment that happens if the structure of care in Oregon does not change for everyone. I am in support of SB 704.