

February 12, 2023

To Whom it May Concern:

I am writing on behalf of SB 704. I could easily make this testimony about my personal story as I have struggled with insurance and medical costs much of my adult life. Particularly as a single parent. Premiums kept rising and coverage continued to diminish. Out-of-pocket expenses for myself and two children found me with multiple bills that I could not afford. For one hospital stay and/or routine examinations, where labs or other extra services were ordered, I could expect 2-3 different bills requesting payment not included with my insurance plan. It was exhausting, embarrassing, and defeating. I am now in a better space to combat medical expenses, though it still costs me thousands every year. Healthcare continues to become more and more cost prohibitive. It is a difficult choice I have to make each September when the benefit year renews. It has been extremely difficult on a personal level. But let me speak with regard to another scenario.

I am a public school teacher. I can tell you that in my nearly 20 year career, things have become more difficult. Yes, a lot of this can be attributed to Covid, but the lack of healthcare is the common thread. This year I have several kids who have undiagnosed ADHD. Please know I am not a medical doctor, nor do I profess to be. However, in my experience, I have been nearly 100% accurate when it comes to noticing the signs and symptoms of a child who cannot control their impulses minute to minute in the classroom. Kids getting out of their seats, making random noises, tapping their desks with pencils, blurting out, playing make believe with their hands acting out explosions-- they're in another world. These kids are more off task than on, unable to work a solid 15-20 minute stretch without interruption, etc. Sadly, this affects everyone around them. It disrupts teachers and other students. At the crux of this problem is that one student in particular exhibits the most debilitating signs of this diagnosis I have seen and his family has no health insurance. If there is something that happens medically in his family they lose more than typical amounts of school until they ultimately seek treatment at the local Urgent Care facility. This is problematic as he does not have a pediatrician who knows him or his medical history. He does not receive regular well-child checks. He has no medical professional(s) who might discuss the impacts of trauma and abuse his mom and two sisters once suffered and continue to plague and impact their mental wellness.

Having access to healthcare is fundamental. I strongly believe in preventative medicine by having access to factual information presented by medical professionals patients can trust. Not everyone is fortunate enough to have access to healthcare and I see it year after year. It is time that Oregonians realize this is a better option for everyone and will include everyone. Either way, we pay as a society. Wouldn't it be better to be proactive? I say yes to SB 704.

Sincerely,

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