

Submitter: Katherine Lattimer
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Health Care
Measure: SB704

Thank you, chairperson and the committee. My name is Katherine Lattimer.

I support SB 704 because the preventative care provided would save money and lives and because no one should go bankrupt, be houseless, or even die because they can not afford care. The truth is that we already pay for the uninsured or underinsured through ER costs that are passed on through hospital charges and higher insurance rates.

After working in a level-one trauma center for six years, I can tell you that the unexpected does happen. There are car crashes, limbs lost, ladder falls, yet undetected genetic diseases, and cancer diagnoses for people far too young to begin the long treatment awaiting them. I have watched people wait until the last minute to get care for everything from heart disease to an infected tooth, and these are things we could have prevented. My patients told me stories daily about not having a choice to access care when people with more money or insurance did.

How and why do we as a people prioritize who gets healthcare and whom we leave behind? Why are people with money, or a better job, considered more valuable than those without? We have the largest wealth divide in modern times, and it contributes to us losing some of our humanity. Without basic needs like safety, housing, and medical care, how can one feel enough dignity and support to be what most consider a "productive member of society?"

I will soon begin to work as a mental health practitioner, committing one hour each way to provide crisis care in a critical access area where so much of the suffering I have seen is preventable. The clients I saw during my practicum were not disposable. They were human beings with families and friends. They needed help long before they were in crisis and came to us for just a tiny sliver of hope.

There is no reason that in 2023, we shouldn't treat the brain with the same respect and care as the body. It is the one organ that predicts if you can even navigate care or reach what little resources we have. Many polls have shown that the majority of the state and the nation approve of universal healthcare, yet our legislators have not represented us as such. Please listen closely to those that elected you to lead and work together for our well-being.

I am proud that Oregon could be a leader in healthcare innovation. Please allow this bill to move forward.

Thank you,

Katherine Lattimer