



## Advocating for Equity and Diversity throughout Oregon

Chair Patterson, Vice Chair Hayden, and members of the Senate Committee on Health Care,

It is with gratitude that we collectively submit this testimony on behalf of the Oregon Advocacy Commissions (OACs) – the Oregon Commission on Asian and Pacific and Islander Affairs (OCAPIA), Oregon Commission on Black Affairs (OCBA), Oregon Commission on Hispanic Affairs (OCHA), and the Oregon Commission for Women (OCFW) – to eagerly urge the Committee to support the passage of SB 704, which establishes a Universal Health Plan Governance Board and directs said board to create a comprehensive plan for implementing a Universal Health Plan in Oregon beginning in 2027.

Each Commission works for the implementation and establishment of social, political, economic, and legal equity for their constituent populations in the state of Oregon. Each Commission has several statutory duties, all of which revolve around advocacy and equity.

The need for universal, appropriate, and affordable health care is urgent and clear. A universal health plan in Oregon can lead to a more equitable standard of care, lower healthcare costs, reduced economic burden, and an overall healthier population.

Moving forward with universal healthcare is essential to achieving health equity, which the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) has adopted as one of its core values and supports OHA's strategic goal of eliminating health inequities by the year 2030 (Oregon Health Authority, 2023).

This past November, Oregon became the first state in the country to establish a constitutional right to health care with the passage of Measure 111. SB 704 moves us closer to creating a unified, single-payer health care system to ensure coverage for all Oregonians. This is vitally important because, despite the passage of the Affordable Care Act in 2010, some 6% (243,000) of Oregonians remain uninsured. The rates of uninsured are most significant for those who are low-paid workers, young adults, and/or people of color, particularly those who identify as Hispanic, Black, Native Hawaiian, Pacific islander, Native American or Alaska Native (United Health Foundation, 2022).

Additionally, many Oregonians are considered underinsured, with coverage that is inadequate to cover their cost of their health care. Native Hawaiian, Pacific islander, American Indian and Alaska Native communities are overrepresented among Oregonians across the state who are underinsured (OHA, 2017). Lack of or inadequate insurance can have a significant impact on vulnerable populations by

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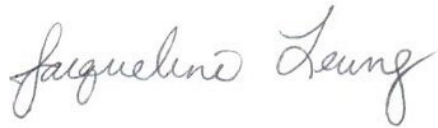
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limiting their access to healthcare, causing financial burden, restricting treatment options, and leading to higher morbidity and mortality rates.

Access to equitable, affordable, comprehensive, quality health care is a fundamental human right, and it is the obligation of the state of Oregon to ensure that access for all Oregonians. The time to move forward with establishing a universal health care plan is now and The Oregon Advocacy Commissions strongly urge the Committee to support the passage of SB 704.

Sincerely,

Oregon Advocacy Commissions



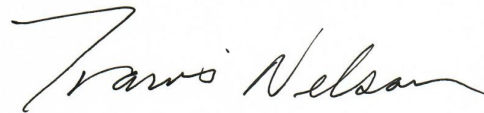
Jacqueline Leung  
OCAPIA Co-Chair



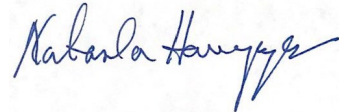
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OCBA Chair



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Travis Nelson  
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Natasha Haunsperger  
OCFW Co-Chair

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- Oregon Health Authority (OHA). (2017). Oregon health insurance survey: Underinsurance fact sheet (2017). <https://www.oregon.gov/oha/HPA/ANALYTICS/InsuranceData/2017-OHIS-Underinsurance.pdf>
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