

Dear Chair Patterson, Vice Chair Hayden, and members of the Senate Committee on Healthcare,

My name is Spencer Trumm and I live in East Portland. As someone who has seen a single-payer healthcare system save lives, I urge you to pass SB 704 and implement Measure 111 without delay.

When a close friend of mine lost her job, she could not afford private health insurance. Medicaid gave her the opportunity to get free preventative healthcare and testing that her earlier workplace and private insurance would have charged her for. When one of these tests detected early-stage breast cancer, she and her care team sprang into action. Without greedy insurance bureaucrats trying to save money by restricting her care or complicated networks limiting her options, she was able to follow the exact care plan recommended by her doctors. Medicaid paid for all her diagnostic procedures, including MRIs and biopsies. It paid for her surgery, too, as well as radiation treatments and all the medications that she needed, without trying to shunt her into lesser-quality treatment for the sake of saving an insurance company's money. Treatment and surgery weren't easy, but thanks to Medicaid, she was able to focus on recovery without the prospect of financial ruin.

Government-run Medicaid made all of this possible. It saved her life and she has been in remission for five years. But lest we forget, not everyone can access Medicaid and Medicare.

My friend has recovered and is working in a job she loves, but as an independent contractor, she is, once again, at the mercy of private insurers. Cancer treatment is expensive, and she could lose everything to medical bills if those treatments don't perfectly align with the nit-picking details of insurance company contracts. Or worse, that insurance company could refuse to let her pursue the course of treatment recommended by her doctors without first trying other treatments that are cheaper for the company. That delay could kill her. I could lose a friend who I've known my whole life because an insurance company wanted to pinch pennies and argue with doctors.

Access to care should not depend on one's age, employment, income, or ability. No one should die because they couldn't afford care or didn't meet the means-testing criteria for some of our existing public healthcare programs. And no one should face ruin for their lack of skills in navigating insurance company bureaucracy or deciphering the gibberish written into their contracts.

Universal healthcare is the solution to this problem of limited access to care. It will simplify the steps patients take to address their health concerns and it will end the injustice of people suffering and dying for lack of ability to pay for medical treatment. By voting Measure 111 into Oregon's constitution, voters have said that Oregon should lead the way in providing universal healthcare. SB 704 will implement that measure by establishing a Universal Health Plan Governance Board and directing that board to create a comprehensive plan for implementing a universal health plan for Oregon.

I urge you to vote YES to pass SB 704 with all the due attention and speed that befit this critical issue.

Sincerely,

Spencer Trumm
East Portland