

Submitter: Mary Hennrich
On Behalf Of: Healthcare for All Oregon
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means
Measure: SB5506

Testimony to Joint Ways and Means Committee
Co-Chairs: Senator Elizabeth Steiner and Representative Tawna Sanchez
Portland Community College
April 8, 2023

Honorable Co-Chairs, Steiner and Sanchez,

For the record, my name is Mary Lou Hennrich and I have lived my southeast Portland home at 7206 SE Salmon St. for 70+ years. Indeed, Oregon is my home. I graduated from University of Portland with a Bachelor's Degree in Nursing in 1969 and then served as a Public Health Nurse and eventually a Public Health Manager and Administrator in Multnomah County for nearly 50 years. I am currently on the board of Healthcare for All Oregon (HCAO) and serving as the volunteer Interim Executive Director.

75 years ago, I was born into a white "middle class" family and was totally unaware of my innate privilege and life advantages. As I visited and served my clients in the Portland schools, clinics and neighborhoods, my eyes began to open. Adequate housing, Healthcare, education, economic security and so much more wasn't available to most of my clients. Their lives were a daily struggle because of this lack of privilege that I had taken for granted. I am eternally grateful for what my many clients and their families taught me--allowing me to come into their homes and partner with me to improve their health and the lives of their families and communities. I saw firsthand their daily hardships and struggles.

I spent my entire nursing and public health career doing my best to prevent illness and promote health—planning and implementing services like many you are attempting to fund today. These health and social services are doing their best, and are definitely needed. I don't want to say anything that will be interpreted as undervaluing them.

HOWEVER, with my eyes open wider some 50 years later, I realize all too often we are trying our best in a broken, chaotic and very expensive healthcare "non-system." This is blatantly UNJUST!

I understand that healthcare is not the MAJOR factor in preventing disease and keeping individuals, families and communities healthy, BUT doing "wallet biopsies" to determine the "kind" of medical care that will be offered to people is wrong, but it is

happening everyday!

Bankrupting individuals and families, not only those who do not have economic privilege, but more and more often, EVERYONE!!!

In my experienced opinion, the healthcare “non-system” we have allowed and even helped to develop must be transformed now!! Nearly a million voters voted “yes” this past November to make healthcare a RIGHT and it will be your jog to make this Right a Reality!

Exactly how you, our elected leaders will do this is still unclear. The exact path has yet to be decided! But you, our legislative leaders, have an opportunity NOW to adequately FUND and enact SB 1089 that will give you the specific information you will need to proceed to make our new constitutional amendment a reality

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Although the final biennial cost has not been nailed down, former Joint Task Force on Universal HealthCare members estimate that approximately \$6million for the next biennium is needed to fund the necessary expert staff and consultants. This will complete the initial work and analysis that you need to answer the many detailed questions that have been, and will continue to be raised.

SB 1089 is your opportunity to have the necessary information you and your colleagues will NEED next legislative session. It is now in your hands to fund 1089 adequately.

The \$6M projected two-year cost is less than \$1.50 per Oregon resident—only 71 cents/year! In our estimation, a very small price to pay.

Thank you for the often “thankless” and difficult job of funding the many worthy and necessary governmental functions you are faced with today. Please include sufficient funding for SB 1089 in your Committee’s final list of “must fund!”