

Submitter: Hongcheng Zhao
On Behalf Of: My neighbors and yours
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On Human Services
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB5025

After submitting testimony on behalf of the Oregon Chinese Coalition, I want to take a moment to share my personal reasoning for supporting HB 5025. My perspective is shaped by a diverse journey—spanning academia and industry, from China to the United States, from a position of privilege to becoming an advocate for my community. I hope my insights will encourage our elected officials to look beyond just the dollar amounts and focus on the common sense behind this bill.

For decades following World War II, the United States enjoyed an unparalleled period of economic prosperity, unmatched by any other country. There were many contributing factors, but one undeniable truth was that this rapid economic growth—marked by suburban expansion, towering skyscrapers, vast highways, and a culture of abundance—was built on seemingly limitless resources. I still remember my American Economy professor pointing out that the U.S. alone consumed three-quarters of the world’s natural resources. He spoke with admiration, and we, as students, shared the same sentiment.

However, globalization, while lowering costs and increasing access to goods, also gradually eroded the middle class. No single entity is to blame—except perhaps our policymakers, who failed to prepare the nation for the inevitable consequences. Instead of reinforcing essential social safety nets—particularly healthcare and education, which are crucial for maintaining a basic yet dignified standard of living—the government has allowed inequality to deepen.

As we now face unprecedented levels of wealth and income disparity, politicians on both sides of the aisle continue to ignore the growing outcry from the very people they serve—many of whom are slipping into financial insecurity. Remember when Andrew Yang proposed universal basic income? Many dismissed it as a radical idea, yet he was among the few who truly grasped the underlying issues plaguing our society today.

HB 5025 may seem like just another budget measure, but in reality, it confronts an uncomfortable truth: access to healthcare is a fundamental necessity, not a privilege. Expanding healthcare coverage is one of the most effective ways to restore dignity and stability to countless families across our state. Ideally, education would also be recognized as a fundamental right, ensuring future generations are equipped to thrive.

I urge every legislator, regardless of party affiliation, to listen to the people and have the courage to lead Oregon in the right direction. Supporting HB 5025 isn't just about policy—it's about reaffirming our commitment to a Healthier Oregon for all.