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OREGON HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
HOUSE DISTRICT 58**

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**Statement from House District 58 Representative Greg Barreto on
Medicaid Redetermination Failure**

Salem, OR- Last week, an Audit Alert was released from the Secretary of State's office shedding light on some 115,000 Medicaid recipients who may not have been eligible for the benefits they received due to a pause in redetermination checks. Members of the House Democrats argued that the conflict was nothing to be alarmed about, arguments of which can be summed up with one in particular from Representative Nosse during last Wednesday's Floor session:

"I want to point out that the discrepancy with regard to a million enrollees is somewhere in the neighborhood of 115,000, and while that is certainly not a number to shy away from or dismiss, it is also a relatively small number for a very large program that delivers healthcare to a million people in our state. I would also like to point out that the centers for Medicaid has known about this problem, it's not like the audit that [was done revealed anything new], we in the Health Care Committee have known about it for quite some time."

In the week following the release of the audit, the Oregon Health Authority, Governor Brown, and others, have made statements about the inaccuracy of those numbers by stating that 115,000 people have not been re-determined, but based on historical trends the number of individuals who were wrongfully distributed benefits is more likely to be about 32,000. It is important during these continued efforts to downplay this number that we really pay attention to the implications of 32,000 people receiving benefits they do not qualify for. According to the Secretary of State's office, Medicaid costs \$430 a month per person. The total cost of this mistake based on those numbers has been estimated to be \$165,120,000. That is certainly not a number to shy away from. In fact, that mistake alone could have covered well over a third of the education budget gap.

It has been rightly stated that irresponsible spending has become a pattern for the OHA. We have seen multi-million dollar mistakes time and again, and they continue to be swept to the

side because the OHA provides a great service. We do not need to accept that because state agencies provide worthy services they do not need to be held to high standards for the way they manage their resources.

It is hard to comprehend that at the same time the majority party is talking about cutting vital services to schools, public employees, the poor and the disabled, they are also making floor speeches in justification of overspending by millions saying, in essence, it's okay because "we knew." The flippant conversation about \$165 million lost in taxpayer dollars speaks volumes to the lack of concern the majority party places on wasting revenue, and how we accumulated a \$1.4 billion deficit in the first place.

The false dichotomy of raising revenue or cutting services only exists because Oregonians have been assured that their money is being spent with care, and there is truly none left to utilize. I am grateful to the Secretary of State's office for lowering that smoke screen and forcing us to be accountable for taxpayer dollars. Combing through each budget and redistributing excess is vital in balancing our budget this session, and beyond. Cuts to spending and cuts to services need not be synonymous.

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