



PRESS RELEASE

OREGON HOUSE DEMOCRATS

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House Majority Leader Shocked by Latest Attempts to Cut Medicaid Funding

Oregon Republicans' proposed referendum would endanger health care coverage for hundreds of thousands

Rep. Julie Parrish (R-West Linn) recently announced that she and her business partners are planning to file a referendum to overturn the legislature's recently approved plan to pay for the Oregon Health Plan (OHP) – the state's version of Medicaid, which provides health care coverage to more than one million people.

If Rep. Parrish's political consulting firm gathers enough signatures, the funding for OHP will go on hold until an election can be held, immediately threatening vital health care coverage for vulnerable families across the state. The default date for that election would be November 2018, almost a year and a half from now.

Given the critical nature of the funding for OHP, an amendment to Senate Bill 229 that will be considered in the House Rules committee tomorrow would set a special election date of January 23, 2018, thereby allowing the legislature to respond during the February legislative session if Rep. Parrish's campaign to slash OHP's funding is successful. The Oregon Constitution, under Article IV, section 1(4)(c) gives the legislature the authority to set special election dates for referenda.

House Majority Leader Jennifer Williamson (D-Portland) released the following statement:

"For all the talk about how Oregon Republicans aren't like Donald Trump, the result of their half-baked health care plans would be the same: skyrocketing premiums for most families, instability in the health care industry, and ripping coverage from vulnerable kids, families, and seniors.

"If this cynical campaign to cut OHP is successful, it will create a huge budget hole and threaten hundreds of thousands of people's health care coverage. The legislature will need to act immediately, which is why I support setting a special election date soon before the 2018 legislative session.

"Rep. Parrish and Republican Secretary of State Dennis Richardson are opposed to this proposal, and would instead endanger health care coverage for seniors, children, low-income families, and people with disabilities. What's worse, they have no viable plan to keep OHP together without the critical funding the legislature just approved.

“The power of voters to propose, challenge, and reject or uphold legislation is fundamentally Oregonian. Setting a January election for Parrish’s referendum attempt allows voters to weigh in quickly on this question without further endangering Oregonians’ health care coverage.

“I have been outraged by the attempts in Congress to slash health care coverage for 20 million people. Now, it’s simply shocking to see politicians right here in Oregon attempt to do the same thing: take away coverage from vulnerable families, raise premiums for Oregonians across the state, and destabilize Oregon’s critical health care industry without any viable plan to move forward.”

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