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OREGON HOUSE DEMOCRATS

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Oregon House Takes Important Step in Protecting Health Care for More Than One Million Oregonians

Legislation extends sunset on provider assessment that pays for a portion of the Medicaid program

SALEM – The Oregon House of Representatives voted on Tuesday to protect Oregon’s Medicaid expansion and the health care for Oregon families – including 400,000 children, as well as seniors and people with disabilities – who otherwise could not afford a doctor’s visit and are often forced to go to the emergency room when they are sick.

House Bill 2010 extends the sunset to 2025 on an assessment on health care providers, which is used to cover the state’s share of the Medicaid program and allows the state to obtain significant federal matching funds. Oregon is one of 49 states that uses this type of funding mechanism. This legislation was negotiated as part of a larger budget package for the Oregon Health Plan throughout the interim among a diverse group of stakeholders.

“Oregon was among the first states in the country to expand Medicaid,” Rep. Rob Nosse said (D-Portland). “We should be proud of this accomplishment. If there is any doubt about our decision to do this, let me assure you that Oregon voters reiterated their commitment to the Medicaid expansion a little more than a year ago with their overwhelming approval of Measure 101.”

“While House Bill 2010 does not, in and of itself, close our Medicaid funding gap, it is essential that we pass these traditional assessments now and give the Legislature ample time in the remaining months of the 2019 session to engage in a robust discussion for how to fill the remaining funding gap,” Rep. Nosse added.

Currently, the Oregon Health Plan, which administers the state’s Medicaid program, provides health care to nearly 400,000 children and adults earning at or below 138 percent of the Federal Poverty Level, or about \$16,753 per year.

The legislation also extends the sunset on Oregon’s reinsurance program, which will again reduce individual insurance premiums by six percent.

The full package helps stabilize health insurance rates for everyone by providing Oregonians with lower cost preventative care, rather than forcing people to get their health care in the emergency room where the costs are paid for by the insurance premiums of every Oregonian.

“This legislation and the stability it creates is critical to the further development of our health care transformation for the good of our communities and whole person health care,” said Rep. Tiffany Mitchell (D-Astoria).

Rep. Rachel Prusak (D-West Linn), who works professionally as a nurse practitioner, spoke during the floor debate about the importance of Medicaid stability for the in-home palliative patients she treats.

“What I believe House Bill 2010 will do is provide the certainty that my patients need, and every Medicaid recipient needs across our state,” Rep. Prusak said. “This is a reasonable, responsible and consensus bill that builds off what this legislature did in 2017 and will ultimately provide years of stability. Also, following the overwhelming passage of Measure 101, it’s what I believe Oregonians have told us they want.”

The legislation passed the House 44 to 15, and now moves to the Oregon Senate for consideration.

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