



NEWS

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Jared Mason-Gere (503) 986-1907

Big Win for Oregonians as Health Care Transformation Passes House Floor

*Though a Week Late, Bill Will Provide Cost Savings, Increased
Access*

SALEM- House Democrats were joined by twenty-three Republicans on Thursday in supporting SB 1580, the Health Care Transformation Act, which is projected to save the state billions over the coming decade, provide greater access to care, and bring down overall health care costs. Despite a sometimes questionable future as the committee referral process dragged out, those who had predicted easy passage for the bill were proven right.

"People have referred to this bill as one of 'the Governor's bills.' Really, this is Oregon's bill. This bill will benefit Oregonians from one end of the state to the other, and was created by Oregonians representing different interests and ideologies who worked on this legislation month after month, often late into the night," said Rep. Tina Kotek (D-Portland), House Democratic Leader, and one of the point people in the House for development of the legislation.

"Oregonians worked hard to create this legislation, and Oregonians will see the rewards for years to come. We've talked about coming into the February session to focus on doing the business of the people of Oregon. We did an important piece of that work today," said Kotek.

Kotek spoke to the bipartisan nature of the bills and singled out Rep. Tim Freeman (R-Roseburg), crediting his hard work and expertise as a reason the measure passed by such a wide margin. "Rep. Freeman deserves a lot of credit for his efforts on this, and for continuing to push the bill forward."

SB 1580 implements Coordinated Care Organizations, allows for greater information sharing between the Oregon Health Authority and Department of Consumer and Business Services, and increases transparency.

“With apologies to a fellow Irish American, Vice President Joe Biden: This is a big... deal, Mr. Speaker,” said Rep. Val Hoyle (D-West Eugene), Co-Vice Chair of the House Health Care Committee. “This is a proud day for us all. One of the main reasons I’m in the Legislature is to bring down health care costs for Oregon businesses, and increase the quality of and access to health care for Oregon’s hard working families. This bill does that. This bill delivers on a lot of promises.”

It passed the Senate on an 18-12 vote last week and came to the House on February 16. Despite having passed the Ways and Means Committee, and requiring only a routine signature to send the bill to the House floor for a vote, the bill languished in a form of legislative purgatory for five days before a signature from the Republican Co-speaker a few scant minutes before the referral deadline kept the bill moving to passage.

Passage of SB 1580 leverages federal dollars and allows the Legislature to re-balance the state budget.

“Not only does the passage of SB 1580 allow us to increase access to care and bring down costs, but it sets the stage for us to pass the major remaining pieces of legislation. Hopefully we’ll see the Health Insurance Exchange back on the House floor for a vote. We need to take care of that second step in bringing down costs for Oregon businesses,” said Alissa Keny-Guyer (D-Portland).

SB 1580 now goes to the Governor’s desk for his signature.

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