



## OREGON HOUSE REPUBLICAN OFFICE

### For Immediate Release

Wednesday, June 21, 2017

### **Representatives Hayden, Buehler, Kennemer decry healthcare package that passed with no support from House Republican medical practitioners**

**Salem, Ore. —** A two-bill package architected by Democratic Ways and Means leaders that will increase healthcare taxes on an estimated 275,000 Oregon health insurance ratepayers passed on the Senate floor today. No House Republican healthcare practitioners were afforded consideration in crafting the measures. Collectively, the three Republican House Healthcare Committee members' professional experience covers the spectrum across oral, physical and mental health. All were supportive of an alternative package that editorial boards across Oregon urged lawmakers and Governor Brown to consider.

"It's disappointing to see such a complex measure with such a vast impact rushed through the legislative process while another plan that would have spared working-class Oregonians a tax increase was never given any consideration," said Representative Cedric Hayden (R-Cottage Grove). "As a dentist and a legislator, I've worked to ensure low-income Oregonians have the access they need to care. This bill could have the net effect of people losing their coverage when they can't afford their premium increases."

House Bill 2391 creates two new healthcare taxes. The first is a .7% tax on hospitals which will generate \$120 million. These dollars will be incurred by patients who are likely to see increased costs of hospital healthcare in order to pay for the tax. The second tax, a 1.5% insurance premium increase that is estimated to generate \$145 million will be borne by school districts, local governments, small businesses, 217K insurance buyers in the marketplace, and 11,681 college students.

The second bill in their package takes money from an expiring reinsurance program and redirects it to insurance companies. House Bill 3398 was originally a bill to allocate money to a Hunger Task Force before it was gut and stuffed with a kickback to insurance companies.

"As a retired psychologist, I believe one of the most important and neglected aspects of our care delivery system is mental health. Oregon has high rates of mental health problems and suicide, making dedicated mental health investments critical," stated Representative Bill Kennemer (R-Oregon City). Kennemer noted that the alternative package had a funding mechanism that would have dedicated nearly \$7 million dollars to mental health and addiction treatment in Oregon.

Just as recently as this morning, the *Eugene Register-Guard* Editorial Board opined that a better way to fund Medicaid would have been to have a bipartisan package that both parties could solidly support.

"Unfortunately, the hunger for new taxes and Democrats' resistance to accountability prevailed once again in Salem. It was a missed opportunity for more thoughtful, creative and bipartisan lawmaking that would have protected health care for hundreds of thousands of Oregonians while making government work better and smarter in the process," said Representative Knute Buehler (R-Bend).

House Bills 2391 and 3398 are now headed to Governor Brown's desk for her signature. The bills are on an expedited path for becoming enrolled into law in order to guarantee insurance companies a \$50 million "windfall"

from the expiring reinsurance program. Both bills allow that program to continue if signed into law by June 30, 2017.

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