

Testimony in Favor of Portland City Council Resolution To Legislature in Support of Implementation Task Force

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Mayor Hales, Members of the Council, Staff, and Guests:

For the record, my name is Nancy Sullivan. I am a former Board Member of Health Care for All Oregon and a current Board Member of Nurses for Single Payer. As a retired nurse-midwife, I am here to speak in support of the resolution to ask the Oregon State Legislature to create a task force based on the results of the Rand study on financing universal health care in Oregon.

Thank you for taking some time to listen to advocates for universal, single-payer health care in Oregon. Those of us who have been actively supporting this issue appreciate the opportunity to tell you why we believe that the best solution to our current out-of-control health care “system” is the solution adopted by every other developed country.

Support for universal, single-payer healthcare in the United States has been around for decades, but efforts to legislate it into being have been attacked and defeated in every case by heavily-funded insurance, pharmaceutical, and hospital industry lobbies. As grass-roots volunteers, proponents in Oregon know that our strategy to achieve our goal must be to educate the public and to enlist activist supporters. As Nurses for Single Payer, we believe that nurses can be effective advocates. We are actively reaching out to recruit and engage from among the 55,000 registered nurses in Oregon. We are working with the Oregon Nurses Association, already a contributing affiliate of Health Care for All Oregon, and nursing educators throughout the state to take a leading role in our campaign.

The American model of health care is twice as expensive and considerably less effective than care in many other countries. Of particular interest to me as a midwife, U.S. women are more likely to die during childbirth than women in any other developed country, leading the U.S. to be ranked 33rd among 179 countries on the health and well-being of women and children. The burden of this increased mortality falls not only on poor women without access to care, but also on middle-and-upper-class women who receive too much care - unnecessary Cesareans, “elective” inductions, etc. Likewise, our society as a whole is affected by skewed levels of care - too little for some, too much for others. We can do better, and we must do better!

Thank you again for your interest in our campaign for better health for all Oregonians. We hope to have your active support in approving the resolution before you today and in future steps towards universal health care in Oregon.