

An Opinion: Vote YES on Measure 101

By Scott Laird

Oregon voters are being asked to approve or reject Measure 101 in a Special Election on January 23.

The Measure would approve or reject parts of House Bill (HB) 2391 that creates a temporary tax on insurance companies, managed care organizations, and some hospitals as a way to fund health care for low income adults, children, families, and individuals with disabilities. HB 2391 would also provide funding to stabilize health insurance premiums for Oregon families.

If voters reject Measure 101, as many as 350,000 Oregon Health Plan patients will lose access to coverage and some of Oregon's most vulnerable citizens could find themselves without access to medical care, prescriptions, and other benefits they depend on daily. As many as 1 million Oregonians could be

impacted, including 400,000 children, pregnant women, babies, and foster children.

Funding for HB 2391 has already been approved in the last Oregon budget. If Measure 101 fails that funding would disappear, the state budget would be underfunded, and legislators will be forced to go back to the drawing board and find a way to make the cuts needed to balance the budget.

HB 2391 is a tax on hospitals, yet community hospitals across the state are in support of Measure 101. The list of other groups who have come out in support of Measure 101 is wide ranging and covers Oregonians from all walks of life, including Oregon nurses, pediatricians and other physicians, women's rights organizations, local unions, children's rights groups, health care advocates, senior citizen groups, educators, faith-based groups, consumer advo-

cates, and human rights organizations.

The groups speaking out against Measure 101 mostly appear to be individuals and anti-tax advocates.

Increasing health care costs continue to be a major concern for citizens across our state and our nation. Grid lock in our federal government continues and our representatives in Washington appear to be failing to find any real solution to the issue, while threatening health coverage for children, the elderly, and the disabled.

Until the federal government decides to make health care coverage for all our citizens a priority, it is up to individual states to provide protections. Approval of Measure 101 tells Oregon's most vulnerable citizens that we see them and we care about them.

Please join me in voting YES on Measure 101.

Bonamici Leads Opioid Crisis Discussion in Multnomah County

Congresswoman brings together Multnomah County District Attorney Underhill, Sheriff Reese, health care providers, and people in recovery

Congresswoman Suzanne Bonamici (D-OR) convened a discussion about the toll of the opioid crisis with Commissioner Sharon Meieran, health care providers, treatment specialists, school counselors, people in recovery, Multnomah County Sheriff Mike Reese, and District Attorney Rod Underhill.

"The opioid crisis is taking lives and tearing apart families. We must do more to confront it directly," said Congresswoman Suzanne Bonamici. "People from all walks of life and all parts of Oregon tell me heart-wrenching stories of loved ones lost to addiction. It's important that we hear their stories and learn from them, and also hear from health care providers, treatment providers, law enforcement, and people in recovery about their efforts to break the cycle of addiction. There is no single solution. Local, state, and federal officials must cooperate to address this crisis."

"We've made important strides but have much work to do - today's meeting put the right people at the table to help chart our next important steps in

addressing the opioid crisis," said Elizabeth White, OrCRM Project Manager at Lines for Life. "Rep. Bonamici is using the leadership and convening capacity of her office to help us all roll up our sleeves and reach our objectives in our efforts to reduce the number of opioids in circulation, improve pain management, and expand access to addiction treatment and Naloxone. We are glad to be part of this important forum."

"As the opioid epidemic continues to dramatically increase in terms of human cost and health care expense, no greater need exists in this region than for housing units to empower individuals with substance use disorders to break the cycle of drug and alcohol use and homelessness," said Andy Mendenhall, MD, Central City Concern's Senior Medical Director for Substance Use Disorder Services. "Folks simply cannot recover when they are sleeping outside."

This was the third discussion the Congresswoman has convened on the opioid crisis, following similar events in Clatsop and Yamhill counties. She will hold discussions in Columbia and Washington Counties later this month.

The Congresswoman supports several pieces of legislation designed to address the opioid crisis:

- The Addiction Treatment Access Im-

provement Act, HR 3692, to expand medication-assisted treatment

- The STOP OD Act, HR 664, to expand prevention, promote treatment and recovery, and provide training and equipment for Naloxone

- The Synthetics Trafficking & Overdose Prevention Act, HR 1057, to better screen foreign illegal opioid imports

- The Opioid Immediate Suspension Order Act, HR 4073, to restore the ability of the Department of Justice to respond to the growing opioid crisis

- Supported \$1.6 billion for opioid response in the last two years and has called for additional investments in these programs

Bonamici continued to oppose multiple efforts in Congress to repeal the Affordable Care Act and reduce Oregonians' access to affordable, high-quality health care.

"Across Northwest Oregon, I've heard that access to affordable health care is the best first step in combatting the opioid crisis," said Bonamici. "The Affordable Care Act made great strides in improving access to behavioral and addiction services, but there is still work to do until all Oregonians have access to affordable health care. I'll continue to work to improve, not limit, access to health care and work together on ways to bring down health care costs."

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reflecting the spirit of our community

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