

## EDITORIAL

## Oregon's new Medicaid system a beacon for nation

Health care costs are sucking the life out of Americans. It's true. The United States spends more than any other country on health care: More than \$2 trillion each year. That's 17 percent of our GDP goes into health care costs, according to the Congressional Budget Office, and it's on the rise.

Health care costs are rising faster than our earnings. In fact, a U.S. Department of Labor study shows that in the past decade, premiums for employment-based private insurance rose 114 percent. Small and mid-sized businesses

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are looking at double-digit increases in their coverage costs, which cut into earnings and employment opportunities. The cost has expanded far beyond access for many Americans who are now going without insurance, or preventative care —

and without jobs. The Oregon Health Authority estimates 16 percent of the state's population is uninsured.

It is at once a trickle down tragedy and a pyramid scheme we are all paying into, insured or not. On the other hand, the system has also created the irony of the perfect insurance customer: one who has insurance through their employer, but whose deductibles and pharmaceutical costs are high enough to prevent them from using it constructively.

Oregon is poised to show the country that there can be a better system, one that actually encourages health care access, rather than discourages its use. The goals to cut costs mean avoiding the failures in the system. That means keeping patients out of emergency departments and hospital beds and psychiatric wards. It means keeping them healthy in their homes, and equally important, keeping them informed and engaged in their own wellbeing.

It also means that the very real impact of social and economic disparity can be measured in conjunction with a person's health. By contracting with social service operators, health care providers will have an even greater investment in alleviating the impact homelessness and poverty may have on a person's long-term wellbeing.

If the promise bears out, Oregon's run with coordinated care organizations will prove a working template for the federal health reform movement. So much so that the federal government has invested \$1.9 billion into Oregon's new system over the next five years, on the basis that the system will improve health and lower costs.

We would also hope that it kick starts a new dialogue around health care — one that focuses on the potential of a truly healthy population, rather than political rhetoric and myths of our global superiority in the field.

The coordinated care network is a smart move for Oregon, and for the 600,000 Oregonians on Medicaid who will now be enrolled in coordinated care organizations. It has been years in the making, with a constant push by health care and social service advocates at all levels to put a promise into practice. It will not be without its growing pains, but it has the potential to bridge the gap between believing in a functional health care system, and actually having one.

## Connect with the world through Street Roots

We are excited to be partnering with Hotels4Change and the International Street Newspaper Network on a new project to help Street Roots raise money.

If you are a business traveler or just going on vacation, Hotels4Change lets you to book their hotels through a booking agency that gives Street Roots five percent of the purchase.

Street newspapers in Holland and Japan have used the program for the past year and have offered readers a great deal on hotel costs, while also raising more than \$20,000 a year off the program. It's a great way for people traveling on vacation, or who live on the road to help Street Roots. It's a

win-win.

If you are interested in taking part, go to Street Roots homepage at [www.streetroots.org](http://www.streetroots.org) and look for the Hotels4Change ad.

Street Roots is one of more than 120 street newspapers globally. We have street newspapers in 40 countries, in 24 languages. Street Roots works with the International Network of Street Papers on a variety of projects, including the Street News Service, a newswire created to allow street newspapers around the globe share content.

As the gap between the rich and the poor continues to grow locally and globally, the street newspaper movement offers people experiencing poverty a hand up and local communities a chance to be engaged. We are proud of the work we do. Readers are a big part of what makes us successful. We can't thank you enough.



Israel Bayer is the executive director of Street Roots. You can reach him at [israel@streetroots.org](mailto:israel@streetroots.org)

## DIRECTOR'S DESK

By Israel Bayer



By Fred Davis

## Our mission

Street Roots creates income opportunities for people experiencing homelessness and poverty by producing a newspaper and other media that are catalysts for individual and social change.

Street Roots publishes every two weeks, launching on Fridays, and is available exclusively through our street vendors or by subscription. We are proud members of the North American Street Newspaper Association and the International Network of Street Papers.

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## Street Roots Rose City Resource

Street Roots publishes the Rose City Resource, a comprehensive booklet of services for people experiencing homelessness and poverty. To inquire about getting an order of the Rose City Resource for distribution, please write to [pdxrosecityresource@gmail.com](mailto:pdxrosecityresource@gmail.com). Resources are also available online at [www.rosecityresource.org](http://www.rosecityresource.org).

## Vendors

Street Roots vendors buy the newspapers for 25 cents each and sell them for \$1, keeping the 75 cents in profit for themselves. In order to keep the cost low to our vendors, we receive additional support from donations and in-kind contributions.



**75¢**  
goes directly to the vendor  
who sold you the paper

**25¢**  
goes toward  
printing costs

Vendor orientations are at 1 p.m. every Monday, Wednesday and Friday at the Street Roots office.