



NEWS RELEASE

OREGON TAKES A MAJOR STEP TOWARD AFFORDABLE QUALITY HEALTH CARE

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Oregon takes a major step toward affordable quality health care

'Aim High: Building a Healthy Oregon' presented to Governor

(Salem) -- Oregon's blueprint for health security now is in the hands of Governor Ted Kulongoski and the 2009 Oregon Legislature.

And its authors have challenged state leaders to act now on the blueprint's key components in the upcoming legislative session and begin to "bend the curve" of steep health care costs that undermines the health of Oregonians and threatens the economic viability of families, businesses, communities and the state budget.

"This comprehensive plan puts Oregon at the forefront of the health care debate – and maps a visionary and pragmatic approach to resolving what has been called the most important domestic issue facing America," said Bill Thorndike, Oregon Health Fund Board chair and CEO of Medford Fabrication, when he and his six fellow Board members presented their report today in Salem.

As Eileen Brady, Board vice-chair and co-owner of New Seasons Markets, emphasized, "Other countries have affordable, high quality healthcare. We are not looking for a needle in a haystack. We need the political courage to act on the best ideas to achieve full access to healthcare."

Oregon lawmakers created the citizen Board in the spring of 2007 to examine the state's health care problems and come up with an action plan for reform. The Plan, 14 months in the making and titled 'Aim High: Building a Healthy Oregon,' is the result of the most extensive analysis of health care in Oregon in 20 years

Beginning in October 2007, 150 Oregon volunteers from a variety of backgrounds who sat on the seven committees and two work groups joined the Board in receiving expert testimony, reviewing leading edge research, and studying successful models in other states and countries. Their recommendations, developed during close to 100 public meetings, became the basis of the Board's Plan.

An additional 1,500 Oregonians from across Oregon gave the Board input during statewide town hall meetings and by submitting written testimony and comments.

Oregon's problems can be summed up as follows: "Health care costs too much, too many Oregonians are not getting the right care at the right time and place, and egregious disparities exist in how the care that **is** provided is dispensed to those most in need," explained Marcus Mundy, Board member and head of the Urban League of Portland.

(more)

Oregon's remedy: "The Board is in unanimous agreement. Our current health care system is broken and we must undertake a fundamental redesign that will alter the way we *think about, practice, use* and *pay for health care* – the keys to controlling costs and getting quality care that promotes health," stressed Jonathan Ater, Board vice-chair and head of Ater Wynne LLP. "At the same time, we must move forward to make affordable quality care available to every Oregonian."

National experts recognize this dual approach as necessary for successful, sustainable reform.

For an initial down payment of \$5-7 *million* for developing infrastructure next year, the Board believes that Oregon can start down the road toward realizing a \$10 *billion* return on investment in ten years.

According to the Board, "Oregonians cannot simply put more good money into a broken system and expect that it will work. Healthcare costs too much. It is crippling our citizens and our businesses. The healthcare system we envision will lower the cost of healthcare and increase the health of our citizens. It will play a large role in stabilizing our economy.'

'Oregon has the creative spirit, the scientific talent and the leadership to become a national pacesetter in health and health care. We can't afford not to act."

The Board's plan for action, "Aim High: Building a Healthy Oregon" can be found online at: http://www.oregon.gov/OHPPR/HFB/docs/Final_Report_112408.pdf

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