

Oregon Interfaith Health Justice Campaign

A Project of Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon, the Archimedes Movement and Oregon Action

Steering Committee

Rev. David Bean, West Linn

Rev. Dr. T. Allen Bethel,
Portland

Tom Burns, Portland

Rabbi Michael Z. Cahana,
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Aelea Christofferson, Bend

Samira Godil, Portland

Bob Horenstein, Portland

Betty Johnson, Corvallis

Rev. Deacon Jim Mosier,
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Linda Payne, R.N., Portland

Robina Ingram Rich, RN,
MS, MPH, Portland

Imam Mikal H. Shabazz,
Portland

Rev. Bruce Strade, Portland

Tricia Tillman, MPH

Ron Williams, Portland

Representing Partner Organizations:

David Leslie, Executive
Director, Ecumenical
Ministries of Oregon

Liz Baxter, Executive Director,
Archimedes Movement

Jo Ann Bowman, Executive
Director, Oregon Action

January 28, 2009

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Chuck Hofmann, MD, MACP, Baker City

Joe Robertson, MD, MBA, Portland

Nita Werner, MBA, Beaverton

Dear Chair Eric Parsons, Vice-Chair Lillian Shirley, and members of the Oregon Health Policy Board,

The Oregon Interfaith Health Justice Campaign is a joint project of Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon along with the Archimedes Movement and Oregon Action. Our campaign steering committee, as you can see, is made up of faith leaders and health practitioners from diverse religious traditions.

Despite our diverse beliefs, we are united in our belief in the inherent dignity and value of every person, and that this entitles each person to certain fundamental human and civil rights. One of those, in our view, is a right to affordable, high quality medical care for every resident of Oregon.

We supported the passage of HB 2009 and we are thrilled to see Oregon's progress towards health justice. We also wish to warmly welcome you to your service on the Health Policy Board, and to pledge our support and cooperation in achieving the goals set out by HB 2009. We know that your work in the coming months and years will be critically important and we look forward to working with you to make sure that all Oregonians benefit from the formation of a world class health system.

We would want to encourage you to take into consideration some of our core principles when making the critical decisions that will come before the board. The Oregon Interfaith Health Justice Campaign (IHJC) has articulated five basic principles as part of an IHJC Statement of Conscience. We invite you carefully consider these principles which have been signed a large, diverse and growing group of religious leaders and health reform advocates.

Oregon Interfaith Health Justice Campaign Statement of Conscience: My religious or ethical tradition teaches me that fostering health and caring for the sick and injured are basic human responsibilities rooted in the foundational principle of

human dignity. I believe that the crisis of American health care is not merely an economic or political problem—it is a moral challenge to all of us—as people of faith, and as citizens of a democracy. I believe that access to health care is a fundamental human right and an important measure of social justice. My commitment to basic human dignity leads me to endorse the following five foundational principles for a just health care system:

1. **Inclusive**— Comprehensive health services should be available and accessible to all, regardless of ability to pay, age, race or ethnicity, personal health history or immigration status.
2. **Effective** — Our health care system should contribute to our wellness by providing high quality services that have proven value in promoting health, including primary and preventative care and effective management of chronic disease.
3. **Affordable**—Health care should be affordable for individuals and families, and the health care coverage strategy should be affordable and sustainable for society as a whole.
4. **Equitable**— Particular efforts should be made to eliminate disparities in health care access, quality and outcomes that affect different racial, ethnic and socioeconomic groups.
5. **Secure**—Health care access and insurance coverage must be guaranteed to all and should be continuous. This means that health reform must address the issue of portability in a way that guarantees all are seamlessly insured regardless of employment status, and it should insure that health coverage is not denied (or made prohibitively expensive) for those who have pre-existing conditions.

We hope you will let us know any ways that the OIHJC can be helpful to you as you seek to pursue these goals, and we look forward to working with you in the weeks and months ahead.

Thank you for taking the time to acquaint yourself with the Oregon Interfaith Health Justice Campaign. We look forward to working together to build a health system in Oregon that compassionately responds to the dignity of every person.

I plan on appearing before the Board at the February 9th meeting to expand on this letter and answer any questions.

Sincerely,

Mark Mathis
Oregon Interfaith Health Justice Campaign Organizer

On behalf of the OIHJC Steering Committee and the 117 signers of the OIHJC Statement of Conscience.