



February 16, 2024

Senate Health and Long Term Care Committee  
Senate Hearing Room 4  
J.A. Cherberg Building  
Olympia, WA 98501

**RE: Senate Health and Long Term Care Committee Public Hearing on HB 1957**

Dear Chair Cleveland and Honorable Members of the Senate Health and Long Term Care Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony **in support of [HB 1957](#)**, bipartisan legislation that would protect access to no-cost preventive care for Washingtonians across the state. United States of Care (USofCare) is a non-partisan, non-profit organization working to ensure [everyone](#) has access to quality, affordable health care, regardless of health status, social need, or income. We work in states across the country to develop pragmatic policy solutions that are designed to respond to the needs of people. We strongly support the efforts to protect no-cost access to preventive services and respectfully request the committee's support of HB 1957.

The high cost of health care impacts every part of people's experience with the health care system, from rising premiums to high deductibles and cost-sharing. Between 2016-2019, Washingtonians on the individual market saw their health care costs increase [13%](#), nearly doubling the rate of inflation. Washington residents are not immune to feeling the impact of these increased costs: [more than half](#) of Washingtonians report delaying or going without medical care due to the high cost, while [81%](#) report worrying about their ability to afford health care services in the future.

These affordability and access challenges have only been compounded by national events. On March 30, 2023, a district court judge issued a nationwide ruling in the *Braidwood Management v. Becerra* case that would block the federal government from [requiring private health insurance plans](#) to provide many types of no-cost preventive services Washingtonians have come to rely on over the past decade, such as cancer screenings and mental health interventions. Preventive services are an important tool for detecting illness early, improving health outcomes and keeping health care costs low for people. Although currently undergoing appeal, if this decision were to take effect nationwide, [more than 3.8 million Washingtonians with private health insurance, including nearly 900,000 children, may lose access to these important preventive services without cost-sharing if the legislature does not take action.](#)

We know that people's concerns about possible costs keep them from getting preventive services and that [87% of people support](#) eliminating out-of-pockets costs for basic health care services.

Even low levels of cost sharing – [as low as \\$1](#) – have been shown to [reduce demand for even high-value care](#), in turn [increasing emergency room utilization](#), and, most importantly, leading to [worse health outcomes](#). [Nearly half](#) of people report likely choosing to skip some of the most common preventive care services, such as hypertension, HIV and depression screenings, if they are forced to pay out-of-pocket. [Research](#) shows that introducing some form of cost-sharing for PrEP – which has been highly effective at preventing HIV – could increase HIV infections nationwide by 2,000 a year, while [substantially increasing](#) PrEP abandonment rates. These changes to coverage will likely have a disproportionate impact on communities of color, low income people, and the LGBTQ community, [further limiting](#) these populations’ access to essential preventive services and reversing progress made towards [reducing health disparities](#).

We strongly recommend Washington codify language that includes all protections for no-cost preventive services protected in the ACA – services recommended by the USPSTF, services for women, infants, and children by the [Health Resources and Services Administration \(HRSA\)](#) and vaccinations recommended by the [CDC’s Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices \(ACIP\)](#). Recently, several states have taken action to enshrine these protections. Just last year, [8 states](#), including [Colorado](#), [Massachusetts](#), and [Oregon](#), passed bills to join the other [15 states](#) that have codified protections for all of the services recommended by the USPSTF, ACIP, and HRSA.

We thank the committee for your commitment to ensuring Washington residents are able to access the services they need to keep themselves and their families healthy, without worrying how to pay for it. **United States of Care is supportive of HB 1957 and strongly encourages the committee to vote in favor of this bill.** We thank the committee for its work on this issue and urge the committee to consider United States of Care a resource moving forward. Please do not hesitate to reach out if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

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