

“What can’t be done in between is collaborative work.” 37:52, October 17th UHPGB meeting

Hello Communications Committee,

I’m looking forward to meeting you folks in a few days, to listening, and to collaborating with you. I’m writing this message to share my enthusiasm, my alarm, ask many questions, and talk about an opportunity on the immediate horizon.

ENTHUSIASM

I’m so excited to begin working with all of you. Universal Healthcare is such a clear necessity, and, as far as I can tell, something that we have a path forward to in Oregon. I’m still learning how our government works, but as I’ve been asking folks with more knowledge and experience, these are the statements that I keep hearing:

When the Governance Board delivers their transition plan to our Oregon legislature in September 2026, our elected officials will have the opportunity to move forward with a transition to Universal Healthcare.

If our elected officials choose to not implement that plan, Oregonians can turn this transition plan into a ballot initiative.

From my perspective, I would like the first option, because I want this transition to begin as soon as possible. However, if it does arrive on the ballot, I feel confident that Oregonians will vote to pass it, because we would save money and receive better care.

What’s your perspective on this? Did I describe the legislative reality correctly? Could we spend a moment to reiterate that potential timeline?

ALARM

I began to feel frustrated listening to the UHPGB’s most recent October 17th meeting. The Board spent over 20 minutes discussing whether they are able to email each other. Does this mean that for the last 6 months, you haven’t been able to effectively communicate via email? If so, how can we, the Communications committee, help?

The Public Meeting Law Update with attorney Jacob Gill takes place from 22:40 – 46:10 in last week’s meeting. I’ve transcribed some of it below.

35:40: Jacob Gill

“So, replying to acknowledge receipt, that’s not a problem. Once you start replying to engage in a conversation, that creates the same problem as calling someone, which is that you lose control of that conversation, and how it might be used, or passed along to someone else on the committee, or someone else on the board, so that’s where the risk, that’s where you run the risk, and that’s why it’s easier just to refrain from that, but certainly responding to acknowledge receipt is just fine.”

Jacob's comment: "you lose control of that conversation", gives me pause. From my understanding, a definition of conversation is an exchange of information, thoughts, and feelings, using speech, sign language, or the written word. It's not actually something that you can control.

37:33 Cherryl Ramirez

"I mean, this is really dense, technical information, but it's informing decisions or recommendations we are going to make as a committee, and that needs - we can't just do that work in a committee meeting. There's got to be work in between, so that's what I'm concerned about."

Jacob Gill:

"Yeah, what can't be done in between is collaborative work, so for example something that couldn't be done would be to take those questions, circulate those questions, to the- all the committee members and then ask for feedback, input, thoughts on who might want to look at what, or how that additional research might be done. That kind of collaborative- those types of collaborative interactions are just something that has to be done in a public meeting. But, you receiving those from a - you and the staff receiving those from a committee member, and then you working with staff to lay the groundwork for work at the next committee meeting, the next public committee meeting, and then, at the next public committee meeting, arranging for that work to be done in advance of the following committee meeting, unfortunately that's really the way that has to be handled. There is no way to do that - any sort of that collaborative interaction, deliberation, discussion, except in the public meeting context."

To quote Amy Fellows at 43:26, "How do we do the work?"

Considering our capable staff, the 9 members of the UHPGB, the 13 members of the Communications Committee, the 7 members of the Finance and Revenue Committee, the 18 members of the Plan Design and Expenditure Committee, and 10 members of Operations Committee, it seems like we have over 60 of the most qualified Oregonians ready to do some work.

We are motivated and willing to give our precious time to build a functional universal healthcare system for Oregon, and how we can transition to it.

May we send each other emails?

If not, what's the best solution going forward?

I'm concerned about the ability we'll have as committee members to collaborate with the members of the Board. The way I'm interpreting the legalese, it seems that we can only receive any new information, or feedback, during our scheduled monthly meetings. I hope I'm wrong. That really has prompted my sending this testimony, which could have been an email. I fear we will only have one meeting to discuss this next opportunity.

OPPORTUNITY

The State of Reform Conference is being held in Portland on Thursday, November 21st. If you haven't been, I recommend attending, it's a great event. Here is the Conference overview.

"The State of Reform conference is focused on bridging the gap between health policy and political reality. Too often, those with good ideas for reforming healthcare don't have a solid understanding of how the legislative process works. Those who understand politics don't always understand the intricacies of the healthcare system. If you are interested in understanding what occurs at the nexus of healthcare and politics, then this is the conference for you!"

I think that the Governance Board should be featured at this conference. By highlighting the work of the Universal Health Plan Governance Board, we can jump-start the conversation about this legislative reality, and the opportunities present for our state to transition to universal healthcare. This is one of the biggest yearly gatherings of Oregon healthcare and governmental leaders. If we connect with these Oregonians at next month's conference, we will have a better-informed public moving forward.

I feel confident that on October 23rd, the Communications Committee can come to a consensus about a recommendation for how the Governance Board could participate in this year's conference. We will even have two opportunities to do so: Wed 10/23/24 and Wed 11/20/24. I am hopeful that 30 days before the conference is enough time for the State of Reform staff to be nimble, and adjust or augment their conference schedule for such an important, relevant, and time-sensitive topic.

We have 99 weeks to create and deliver this transition plan. At next year's State of Reform, we will have 47 weeks.

The conference is the same day as the UHPGB's 9 am – 12 pm November 21st meeting, but the conference lasts until 4 pm. Could some members of the Board attend in the afternoon? Could we stream the public meeting in the morning from a conference room at the Hilton?

Last week, via email, I shared information about this opportunity with our UHPGB staff, our two Communications committee UHPGB co-chairs, and the State of Reform staff. Have all of these details been taken care of, but perhaps as a committee member I just can't be informed of the progress until our public meetings?

Do any of our staff, Board members, or other committee members know anyone who works for State of Reform, or maybe one of conference sponsors listed below? If you have a contact there, could you reach out to them before our October 23rd Communications meeting, and encourage State of Reform to find a way to feature the Universal Health Plan Governance Board at the conference? Is this really the most efficient way for me, as a member of the Communications committee, to try and request something time-sensitive from both the Board, our staff, and other members of the committees, in-between our scheduled meetings?

State of Reform Conference Sponsors:

CareOregon, Coalition For a Healthy Oregon, Allcare Health, Regence, Carelon, Kaiser Permanente, Yamhill Community Care, Hazel Health, Unite Us, HMA, Siftwell, Magellan Healthcare, Findhelp

It makes a lot of sense to me that this annual conference about Oregon healthcare reform would be excited about highlighting the existence of the Universal Health Plan Governance Board, a group that has been formed specifically to create a comprehensive transition plan to universal healthcare for Oregon. I believe that the best way for us to have a successful transition will be if there is consistent communication with the public, and with Oregon healthcare leaders. This conference is a yearly opportunity that we simply cannot let go to waste

Thanks for your time, I'm looking forward to working with you.

Collin
HCAO Portland Chapter