

# OREGON HEALTH AUTHORITY

## News release

**Nov. 10, 2009**

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### ***Oregon is not waiting for health reform: first meeting of the Oregon Health Policy Board***

Today with the first meeting of the Oregon Health Policy Board (OHPB), Oregon took the next step in its health reform movement to lower costs, increase quality and access, and improve the health of all Oregonians.

The nine-member citizen board that met today serves as the policy-making and advisory body for the Oregon Health Authority (OHA), the new agency created by the 2009 Legislature. The Health Authority combines state health organizations and divisions – from the Division of Medical Assistance Programs (Medicaid) to the Public Employees Benefit Board – as one agency. The board was appointed by Governor Ted Kulongoski and approved by the Oregon Senate in October.

"While the eyes of the nation are focusing on the health care debate in Congress, Oregon will continue to lead with changes on a state level," says Gov. Kulongoski. "Ultimately creating policies and programs that improve the health of Oregonians is going to come down to state innovation and this board and agency will be leading the way."

Among the first actions the board will focus on is how to coordinate the purchasing power of the state of Oregon to lower costs and provide leadership for quality improvements both for the state and for the private market.

"The new Oregon Health Authority purchases health care for a substantial share of Oregon's market," says Dr. Bruce Goldberg, director designee of the Oregon Health Authority. "With that kind of purchasing power we can have a real impact."  
(more)

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In addition, the OHPB will create a business plan for an Oregon Health Insurance Exchange which would allow Oregonians and their families to buy and own the health coverage they want at a competitive price. This opportunity would give individuals and families access to more choice and increased flexibility in offering health benefits and lower prices in the individual coverage market. This work will solidify Oregon as an innovator and leader in health care reform.

OHPB also will provide leadership on ways to include prevention in the health care equation by focusing efforts on reducing diseases such as diabetes and heart disease that are often preventable by lifestyle choices. The Health Authority and the board will also be addressing incentives for payments to health care providers for prevention and comprehensive management of chronic diseases, quality outcomes, issues of access to health care in rural Oregon, health care workforce development, and electronic health care records, among other things.

“The ultimate goal is to make sure everyone in Oregon has access to quality, affordable health care and that we improve the health of all Oregonians,” says OHPB chairman Eric Parsons. “We will be addressing that in every way we can.”

In addition to creating the Oregon Health Authority, the Governor and the Legislature made a leap forward in improving access to health care with the passage of the Healthy Kids plan and by providing coverage to 35,000 additional low-income adults on the Oregon Health Plan. Now the Oregon Health Authority will look at the entire health system and how it can be improved for everyone.

Efforts to reform health care in Oregon began in 2007 with the establishment of the Oregon Health Fund Board (OHFB). This board developed a comprehensive plan to contain health care costs, address quality issues and ensure access to all Oregonians. The newly appointed Oregon Health Policy Board (OHPB) will carry out the plan.

For more information about the Oregon Health Authority (**see names, attached**) go to:  
<http://www.oregon.gov/OHA/index.shtml>.

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Member name

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Eric E. Parsons (chair)  
Standard Insurance Company (retired)  
Portland, Oregon

Lillian M. Shirley (vice-chair)  
Multnomah County Health Department  
Portland, Oregon

Michael J. Bonetto  
Cascade Healthcare Community, Inc.  
Bend, Oregon

Eileen S. Brady  
Co-Owner New Seasons  
Portland, Oregon

Carlos J. Crespo  
PSU- School of Community Health  
Portland, Oregon

Felisa A. Higgins  
SEIU Local 49  
Portland, Oregon

Dr. Charles E. Hofmann, MD, FACP  
Baker City, Oregon

Joe E. Robertson MD  
Oregon Health Sciences University  
Portland, Oregon

Nina L. Werner  
Ornelas Enterprises Inc.  
Hillsboro, Oregon