

CCO Comment

6/6/15

As an Oregon tax payer, I would like to share my concerns regarding the sale of Trillium to an out of state health insurance company.

First, I am extremely impressed with the progress Trillium has made as the CCO for Lane County. I worked there for four years as a Part D benefit specialist. My job put me on the front line, coordinating efforts between the medical offices, the members with Medicare and Medicaid, the pharmacies, the pharmacy benefit management company, the CCO, and CMS. When I started at Trillium, they had about 5,000 members. Now they have 100,000+ members, and had to jump through incredibly difficult obstacles finding primary doctors for all the newcomers to healthcare after the CCO was invented. They did a brilliant job starting up clinics and working with existing medical offices to bring in more medical professionals to deal with the crush of newly insured Lane County residents. Finding enough providers for all the people was a huge task.

Trillium has also done an amazing job managing the taxpayer's money to provide healthcare for so many people. About the time I left, they were making many improvements on how money was spent. I personally alerted them to a few very simple and effective cost-saving changes they could make. Kudos to the entire staff of Trillium for making this transition so successful.

What concerns me is how much profit is going to the corporate leaders and owners now. Of course they should be rewarded a return for what they have achieved. Trillium was started by a group of 300 doctors in our area, and what they have created has benefited our community as a whole. However, isn't the idea of Obama's plan to provide healthcare for all Americans? Why are we not requiring the CCOs of Oregon to redirect their profits, after a certain allowance, to expand Medicaid even more? At this point, it would seem that the income and profits earned at Trillium are, by now, all taxpayer funded. So why aren't the profits being used to put more individuals on the Oregon Health Plan, instead of lining the pockets of the CEO and others? And, at least CEO Terry Coplin *lives* in Lane County, and is, himself, an Oregon taxpayer, *and* he's a super nice guy, so I can almost stomach that he made nearly \$500,000 last year, but I just CRINGE at the thought of all that tax payer's money going to line the pockets of the head honchos in another state.

Even with the broad expansion of Medicaid funded by taxpayers, there are still thousands of Oregonians who cannot afford healthcare. The premiums offered on the Oregon Health Plan are still unattainable for many. They sign up for individual insurance now because they have to, but many drop the premiums after a few months because it's too expensive. Many don't qualify for enough assistance, and the coverage they can afford has such high deductibles and copays, that even with health insurance, they still pay for much of their own medical costs. Shouldn't the profits of the CCOs be contributed to reduce the cost of these Oregonians' premiums? These people are going without treatment, or going into debt to pay medical expenses, while the leaders of the CCOs are buying yachts. I don't get the logic.

I have excellent insurance because I work for the insurance company, but I have not forgotten what it was like to have two small children and no insurance. Who decided that the CCOs should be allowed to

keep big profits while this group of Oregonians suffer? As a taxpayer, I don't want the CCOs to keep big profits. The profits need to be funneled back to help more taxpayers afford quality health insurance.

Another issue is the fact that the medical professionals get paid a fraction of the cost of services for Medicaid patients. If nothing else, instead of allowing big profits to accumulate in the CCOs, why are we not paying a higher percentage to the medical community? They are the ones who actually *do* the work and provide the services. Almost every day, I hear concerns from healthcare providers that they aren't getting paid enough, or that a drug costs more than a pharmacy gets reimbursed.

Also, shouldn't we be requiring that the jobs generated by taxpayer's dollars to run the CCOs stay in our own state, and perhaps, even in our own county? Five years ago Trillium employed about 120 people. Now they have 230 employees, and they all live in or near Lane County. Centene has already informed them that the entire customer service department will be eliminated. That's about 40 – 50 jobs. And you can bet, after the dust settles, they will completely close the local offices and lay off the remaining staff, to have all operations done in their current location somewhere back east. They will probably keep a small gratuity office in Lane County with a hand-full of employees, just to save face, and satisfy any state of Oregon CCO requirements. And we can expect to watch the quality of customer service to degenerate rapidly, and the relationships between the healthcare providers and the CCO erode. All of Trillium's hard work building those vital relationships will go down the drain. Such is life of the giant company back east who can't even pronounce Oregon.

I work really hard to earn my \$25,000 a year. I don't have many deductions, and combining my husband's income, we pay a *lot* in taxes. I'm OK with paying taxes if I know the money is being spent usefully. I believe in the idea of healthcare for all; it just makes sense that America should have health coverage for all citizens. But I do not want my hard-earned money going to line the pockets of a bunch of CEOs who only come to Oregon on vacation, and pay the incomes of staff whose tax dollars go to another state, while Lane County suffers the loss of yet another round of layoffs.

In short, the CCO of Lane County needs to stay in Lane County. Period. And the profits of the CCOs all over Oregon need to be funneled back into the healthcare system, which is what the tax was collected for in the first place.

Thank you for reading my two cents.

Sincerely, Cori Knox