

Good afternoon, legislators, and thank you Chairmen Hagedorn and Loertscher for providing us with this opportunity to present our testimonies. It's truly thrilling to see so many people passionate about this pressing issue, and it's my hope that we can work together to close the gap in the 2017 legislative session.

My name is Daniel Liu. I'm a senior at Capital High School, and a member of the Capital Debate Team. I've been following this issue closely for about a month and a half now, and my team and I jumped at the opportunity to participate in this workgroup session. As debaters – more specifically, as policy debaters – we appreciate the nuance and complexities present in any legislation. However, given the scope of this problem, and the fact that many lives are quite literally in your hands, we believe that the only solution to the coverage gap today is one that will provide complete and comprehensive healthcare coverage for all those in the gap.

As the child of two immigrant parents, I was taught at a young age the value and importance of hard work, and I still stand by those values today. However, as I've read the many stories of Idahoans currently living in the gap, it's become apparent to me that these people aren't where they are out of a lack of hard work and effort, but rather out of a flawed system that's set them up to fail. Whether it's the prohibitively high costs of specialist treatment or the Sophie's Choice between maintaining a job and having access to Medicaid, the healthcare system in Idaho is broken, and it's the 78,000 Idahoans in the gap that are paying the costs.

That's why I support Close the Gap Idaho's solution to the coverage gap. It's bad enough for a single individual – let alone 78,000 – to needlessly suffer through treatable and preventable diseases and conditions in the great state of Idaho, but it's even worse that there are solutions out there that will both bring relief to these Idahoans as well as utilize our tax dollars better than haven't been implemented yet. Closing the gap isn't about giving out free handouts – it's about fixing a broken system, a system that often leads to medical problems getting worse instead of getting better, as individuals delay treatment until it's too late. It's about spending our tax dollars more wisely by taking advantage of federal funds to support hardworking families and build a stronger economy for the future. But above all else, closing the gap is about acknowledging the tens of thousands of Idahoans who live without health insurance, and it's about creating a world where they're able to pursue life and liberty and happiness free from the crippling fears and doubts of future illnesses and accidents.

I look forward to the 2017 legislative session, and I hope that Idaho legislators make closing the gap a top priority. Thank you.