The Oregon Health Plan (OHP), a Medicaid waiver program, sought to cover the greatest possible number of low-income residents while also managing limited financial resources. OHP’s founding commitment was to expand coverage for the uninsured, improve access to care for Medicaid clients, pay providers reasonable costs, and maximize federal funds. The plan achieved its goal to expand coverage: the number of uninsured individuals in Oregon dropped from 18% in 1990 to 12.2% in 2000, and the number of uninsured children dropped from 21% in 1990 to 8.5% in 2000. However, it has failed to reach the other goals and faces financial insolvency.

The Oregon Health Plan is not sustainable. The best hope Oregon has is securing additional federal support. Costs could be controlled two ways. Reducing medical errors will help reduce cost of care. Universal health care could replace state programs.