

Written Testimony of the **Caring Ambassadors Program**
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Testimony, Public Hearing
SB 777

Health Care and Human Services Committee
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The Caring Ambassadors Program (CAP) is a national, nonprofit, advocacy organization based in Oregon City, Oregon. We respectfully submit our written testimony herein in support of OR SB 777 (including Amendment 1), which would improve the Pharmacy and Therapeutics Committee (P&T) and Drug Utilization Review (DUR) process.

Our current healthcare system is not built around prevention. An individual should not be penalized if they are diagnosed at a later stage of disease when, in general, treatments are more costly and less effective. It is the system we have of acute care. Until we have a system of prevention in place, deciding treatment based on cost, or life expectancy, is discrimination.

The scope of changes that are happening to our health care delivery system is nothing short of monumental, and yet the end result of these changes falls to the individual, the consumer. SB 777 adds transparency and eliminates discrimination for the consumer. Including Amendment 1 is critical. Diseases do not discriminate therefore it is vital that the P & T committee does not discriminate against any disease state, condition, or expected length of life. Consumers should be educated about their choices by their healthcare provider and then be allowed to choose the best course of action for their condition, family values and culture.

CAP supports SB 777 (including Amendment 1), and would like to see even more inclusion of the consumer in the process. "Nothing about us, without us" is a phrase that should be considered by the members of the P&T committee in their important decision making process. Before making decisions, they should ask two questions; have they heard from the consumer on this issue, and what tangible steps has the administration taken to engage consumer feedback?

The P&T Committee recommendations have broader implications than just access to medications for those consumers accessing the plan. These recommendations set the bar from which other states and health insurance providers will measure prescription drug benefits. Yet, the meetings are conducted in a way that does not encourage public participation. The time, location and materials available to participants are critical to consumers' attendance, engagement and participation.

Our most vulnerable population already has a harder time than the more fortunate accessing care – lack of providers willing to manage the parameters of treating Medicaid as well as transportation and child care problems. It is in the public's best interest to engage the community involved.



CAP believes the following process reforms will enable even greater participation and improve transparency:

- We urge you to learn from the example used in the Oregon Health Exchange meetings and make meeting locations accessible to as many people in the state as possible. One way to do this is by moving the meetings from Wilsonville to Portland where the majority of the consumers on the Oregon Health Plan live. If I decide as a patient I want to be at a meeting to comment, these meetings are being held in Wilsonville on a Thursday afternoon. How many people who access the health plan live in Wilsonville? How many have easy access to public transportation to this location? How many are not working or trying to take care of their families at this time of day? Clackamas County represents only 6.8% of the people who use the plan. Please consider expanding this process or move these meetings to make them accessible to the people that will be using the healthcare plans in Oregon.
- Additionally adding webinar and a call in number to the meetings are inexpensive ways to increase stakeholder involvement and participation. Meetings could be attended from public libraries, county health departments or other existing public agencies.
- Requiring the P&T Committee to divide their agenda into two separate sections is helpful but it should also include that they need to adhere to the agenda provided. People who want to advocate for the poor are likely to struggle with their schedules. When their agenda topic is moved they may be denied their opportunity to be heard.
- Improve public notice. We urge you to invest in outreach to the people affected – providers, consumers and other stakeholders. The public process is best when input is received from the greatest cross-section possible.
- Ensure translator services are available. When a program is developed with consideration of the culture of the community served, there is an increase in service utilization and decrease in early termination of treatment.

Thank you for your time and consideration. CAP greatly appreciates the work you and state agencies are doing to reach the goals of the Oregon Health Authority; improved lifelong health, increased accessibility to quality care and affordable care.

Sincerely,



Executive Director
Caring Ambassadors Program

