

Testimony in Support of SB 533
March 26, 2013
Vera Vos, FNP

Chair Beyer and Members of the Committee: Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of SB 533. My name is Vera Vos. I am a Family Nurse Practitioner with Integrative Primary Care Associates, a primary care clinic in NW Portland. I received my RN and FNP from OHSU and have completed intensive programs in Geriatric Medicine at OHSU and Mind/Body Medicine at Harvard School of Medicine.

At Integrative Primary Care, my colleagues and I care for patients of all ages and for a variety of issues, from acute care to chronic disease and wellness care. As a primary care provider, a strong relationship with each patient is the cornerstone of the care I provide. My colleagues and I are committed to listening to our patients, learning as we teach, and offering the most effective means for each patient to enhance his or her health.

As a Nurse Practitioner in Oregon, I have a special interest in workplace prevention of injury through promotion of health to prevent and improve chronic disease. Workplace injury and workman's comp claims are linked to the extent and level of chronic disease in individuals. Last year I spoke at an OSIA conference on this topic and next month will be speaking at the Workers Compensation Claims Association spring seminar.

I have limited direct experience caring for patients with workers compensation. Prior to my current practice, I worked for Providence at a residency clinic where family practice residents assumed care of patients with work related injuries as part of their training. An additional reason for the residents assuming care, was to ensure continuity in case the care needed extended beyond the 90 days.

Current law only allows NPs to authorize time loss up to 60 days and treat workers' compensation patients for 90 days. I am still new in my current practice but my NP colleagues routinely care for their own patients with work related injuries. The great majority of these are resolved within the 90 day period. A few must be transferred to physicians when their need for care extends beyond the 90 days. There are obvious problems with this arrangement: duplication of care as the new provider becomes familiar with the case, the need for patient and provider to build a relationship, delays in care when patients must wait for appointments while a physician provider is found, interruption of continuity of treatment as the new provider gathers information, possibly increased travel time for the patient, etc.

These are all significant obstacles to good patient care but in my opinion there is something much more fundamental. Though accidents and injuries do happen randomly both in the workplace and out, there is a strong correlation between injuries and general health. Primary Care Providers are cognizant of the relevance of disease prevention and health improvement to the avoidance of injuries. When an injury occurs it is important to help the patient heal but, in the setting of their primary care, maybe even more important to help the patient avoid future injuries.

Current Oregon law places very few limits on the NP practice. The current workers' compensation restrictions contradict Oregon Nurse Practitioners' scope of practice and our statewide efforts to ensure that every Oregonian can easily gain access to care when they need it. SB 533 will help ensure that primary care providers in Oregon, whether it be a physician or a nurse practitioner, can provide care to their patients in their patients' time of need. I urge you to support SB 533. Thank you.