



**Written Testimony in Support of SB 325**

February 11<sup>th</sup>, 2013

Senate Committee on Rural Communities and Economic Development

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Chair Roblan and members of the committee: Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 325.

I am a member of the Oregon Nurses Association's Cabinet on Health Policy and the Chair of the Nurse Practitioners of Oregon's Legislative Committee. I have practiced as a Family Nurse Practitioner for 15 years. For the past 8 years, I've been a clinician at Dunes Family Health Care in Reedsport, Oregon.

The rural health care provider tax credit is an essential recruiting and retention tool for rural clinics and must to be extended. Rural communities have a difficult time attracting quality health care providers, even with this vital tool. Our clinic is currently short two providers. I can't imagine recruiting providers without this benefit to offer.

My spouse and I chose to live in Reedsport because we appreciate the small community lifestyle, easy access to fishing, and breathtaking scenery. Despite the beauty of Reedsport, we consistently have trouble attracting new providers because our community, like many other rural communities in Oregon, lacks some of the more practical assets that appeal to providers with families. For example, our schools have downsized. When recruiting providers for our clinic, I'm often told that they worry the Reedsport area schools will not adequately prepare their children for college.

Our clinic's payor mix is largely weighted toward Medicare and Medicaid patients. This is often the case with rural clinics. The pay is not as great as it can be in urban areas where there are more privately insured patients. As a result, rural providers make less money. Eight years ago I left sub-rural Northern California for the beautiful Oregon coast. At that time my income was significantly decreased, and to this day I still make less than I did when I left California, nearly a decade ago.

Oregon's rural provider tax credit is a significant incentive to work in a rural area, and almost more importantly, to stay. Rural communities need every advantage they can get to recruit quality health care providers. I know that my employer, Dunes Family Health Care, has benefited from the tax credit and so have I.

Please support passage of Senate Bill 325.

Thank you.