



February 8, 2013

Senator Laurie Monnes Anderson, Chair  
Senator Jeff Kruse, Vice-Chair  
Senate Health Care and Human Services Committee  
Oregon Legislative Assembly

RE: SB 98 and SB 440

Dear Chair Monnes Anderson, Vice-Chair Kruse and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Oregon Primary Care Association (OPCA) I respectfully request your support of SG 98 and SB 440. OPCA is a non-profit membership organization comprising Oregon's 31 community health centers. Our members operate 200 clinics statewide that provide coordinated care to 330,000 rural and/or medically underserved patients annually. Oregon's community health centers are medical homes that provide integrated and coordinated physical, oral and behavioral health services to our patients.

Loan repayment for primary care providers' medical school debt is the best available tool to give physicians an incentive to choose primary care instead of more lucrative specialties. Medical students who choose a primary care specialty do so with the knowledge that, as a result of this decision, their lifetime income will be significantly less than it would be in other specialties. However, too many graduating students who are willing to choose primary care and forgo an enhanced salary are unable to do so because of their oppressive debt load. Medical school students graduate with an average of \$150,000 in debt. For dentists, the average debt is \$130,000, and for physician assistants, the average debt is \$60,000.

Oregon's community health centers have relied on Oregon's Primary Care Provider Loan Repayment Program to recruit providers to rural communities and to health centers in more urban areas that care for medically underserved populations. Our providers are dedicated and skilled professionals who offer top-notch care in a compassionate and culturally appropriate manner. They accept the fact that their salaries are lower than those of their medical school classmates who have entered more lucrative specialties. This is the price they pay for pursuing their passion of providing care to our most vulnerable. All they ask is the opportunity to provide this care, even for a low salary. You can give them this opportunity by voting yes on SB 98 and SB 440.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Hummel". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

John Hummel  
State and Federal Policy Director