

June 7, 2013

Joint Committee on Ways and Means
Subcommittee on Human Services
Oregon Legislative Assembly

Dear Co-Chair Nathanson, Co-Chair Bates and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Oregon Primary Care Association (OPCA) I respectfully request that you oppose HB 3309. OPCA is a non-profit membership organization comprising Oregon's 31 community health centers. Our members operate 201 health 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.

HB 3309 is a State bill to resolve a local dispute in Marion and Polk Counties. While the intentions of the supporters of this bill are to resolve the unfortunate local CCO spat, the ramifications of this State bill for that local problem could be bad for the health of low-income Oregonians.

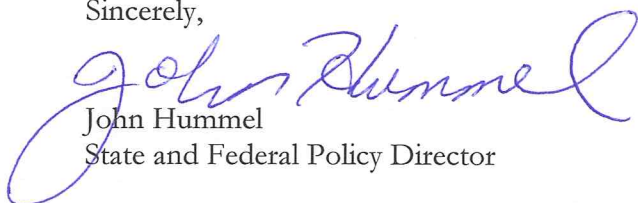
Specifically, this bill would allow a member of a CCO board to be removed by a two-thirds vote of the CCO board. If a member of the board is removed, then the entity they represent would be penalized through a reduced reimbursement rate of 58 percent of Medicare, regardless of provider type. What if this provider is a community health center or another safety-net provider? Such a significant reduction in their reimbursement rate would imperil the ability of these providers to continue providing high-quality care to low-income patients.

I appreciate that it is not the intent of the supporters of HB 3309 to put at risk the health of vulnerable Oregonians. With this in mind, I respectfully suggest it is time for this committee to express their displeasure with the parties in Marion and Polk Counties about how they have handled their dispute, but to then allow the policies and procedures of Willamette Valley Community Health to govern the dispute (with the courts available as the final decider should that be necessary).

The recent amendment to the bill to create a pilot project that limits its geographic coverage is commendable, but insufficient to protect the health of low income Oregonians. If a community health center has a representative on the board of the Marion/Polk CCO, gets sideways with a majority of the board, and is removed pursuant to this bill, the patients of that health center will suffer due to the reduced reimbursement rate penalty. These patients will not appreciate that this bill only applies to their CCO.

HB 3309 is well intentioned, but the unintended consequences that could result from its passage warrant the Ways and Means Committee being the final resting place for this bill. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



John Hummel
State and Federal Policy Director