



Telehealth Alliance of Oregon

Advancing telehealth knowledge, practice and policy in Oregon

Testimony on SB 569
Senate Health Care and Human Services Committee
March 18, 2013

Dear Chair Monnes Anderson and Members of the Committee:

My name is Jo Bell and I am here on behalf of the Telehealth Alliance of Oregon, a statewide organization dedicated to improving telehealth services in Oregon.

Oregon is in the midst of changing our health care delivery system and we believe that telehealth is going to be a key component to the success of that change. As CCOs, hospitals and clinics focus on access to care and meeting health outcomes, telehealth offers a unique opportunity to bring together primary care with specialist and urban with rural. It will also give patients in rural communities the ability to receive necessary treatments without having to leave their communities—making it easier and safer for the patients and keeping more health care dollars in local communities.

While there are challenges to implementing telehealth, none of the issues are insurmountable. SB 569 is an opportunity to address one of the key issues that has been a sticking point for originating facilities - credentialing. Credentialing is founded on the principle that hospitals are responsible for ensuring the highest quality of care possible for patients. Therefore, medical care facilities take steps to verify their healthcare providers' proficiency through the collection, verification, and evaluation of data relevant to the practitioner's professional performance. The issue of who is credentialed at a hospital is extremely important to the integrity of the site. For telehealth to be successful, the receiving site must have full confidence in the providers that are offering the services.

TAO is very supportive of the intent of SB 569, as we want to avoid having a situation develop in Oregon like one that occurred in Montana several years ago, when psychiatrists at one clinic stopped delivering services to originating site hospitals because the burden of credentialing for each individual was too burdensome.

We do have several points of concern that we want to be certain are addressed to fully support the bill:

- 1) Any checklists and/or standards that are developed have equal input from both originating and distance site hospitals; and
- 2) The liability questions are answered and originating site and distance site hospitals all understand the liability limits for each; and

Based upon our participation in the discussions convened by Senator Steiner-Hayward, we do feel that those issues have been discussed and will be addressed in amendments to the original bill.

Oregon has been slowly addressing the issues facing the implementation of telehealth. As issues have been brought to the Legislature in past years, TAO has advocated for and frequently facilitated a collaborative approach to address those issues that involves all stakeholders. Oregon has a great opportunity to increase access and improve health care outcomes by using telehealth and all players need to be involved in the development of a state telehealth policy.

We appreciate Senator Steiner-Hayward's interest in this bill and the continuing interest and support of this Committee in addressing telehealth issues in Oregon. As I stated in my opening, TAO's purpose is to advocate for the

Thank you for your time and I am happy to answer any questions.