

February 5, 2014

Chair Greenlick and members of the House Health Care Committee:

I am Andi Easton, associate vice president of government affairs. On behalf of Oregon's 60 acute care community hospitals and the patients they serve, we encourage you to support HB 4074 and the -3 amendments.

HB 4074 Authorizes the Board of Medical Imaging to waive specified licensing requirements for technologists in rural Oregon, and is sponsored by Reps. Bob Jenson (R-Pendleton) and Mitch Greenlick (D-Portland), and co-sponsored by Kevin Cameron (R-Salem), John Huffman (R-The Dalles), Bill Kennemer (R-Oregon City), Andy Olson (R-Albany), Dennis Richardson (R-Central Point), Jim Weidner (R-Yamhill), and Gail Whitsett (R-Klamath Falls).

As of Jan. 1, 2014, every imaging modality now requires a license in the State of Oregon: ultrasound, MRI, nuclear medicine, and CT. These licenses are in addition to a technologist's primary X-ray license. In order to apply for a state license, a technologist must hold a credential issued by a national credentialing organization in a medical imaging modality recognized by the Board of Medical Imaging. This exceeds the licensure requirements of all of our bordering states.

Meeting the minimum requirements to sit for a national exam has proven to be a challenge for technologists in rural hospital settings. For example, the Nuclear Medical Technology Certification Board requires a minimum of 8,000 hours of clinical experience over a four year span in order to sit for the exam. In some circumstances, especially in rural hospitals, imaging technologists do not have the necessary patient volumes to sustain or garner the required hours of experience within a set timeframe.

The intent of HB 4074 is to give the Board of Imaging a tool to address the barriers for rural communities.

The dash 3 amendments accomplish the following three objectives:

- Allows for the Board to determine what constitutes "substantial experience" instead of prescribing the time frame to 10 years.
- Changes the reference from a federal statute to a state statute defining rural hospitals, the criteria isn't linked to the federal definition of CAHs on the date of the bill's passage. By doing so, it adds seven hospitals to the list that could apply for this waiver.
- Allows the Board to waive the criteria required for an individual to sit for a national exam through state sponsorship. This ensures that quality and patient safety is not compromised.

The bill amended with the adoption of the dash 3 amendment provides the Board of Imaging a tool to grant a license to a technician rural area if the absence of this technician would result in a substantial shortage of availability of services. In addition, it allows for the Board to put parameters on a waived license such as the duration of the waiver, suggest any supervision that may be needed, as well as evaluating the experience of a technician. HB 4074 protects the jobs of current imaging technologists in rural areas, while allowing for rural patients to access imaging services in their communities.

Critical Access Hospitals

Critical Access Hospital (CAH) is a federal designation for rural hospitals that are within 30 miles of another hospital and have 25 beds or less. There are 25 CAHs in Oregon:

- Blue Mountain Hospital
- Columbia Memorial Hospital
- Coquille Valley Hospital
- Curry General Hospital
- Good Shepherd Medical Center
- Grande Ronde Hospital
- Harney District Hospital
- Lower Umpqua Hospital
- PeaceHealth Cottage Grove Community Hospital
- PeaceHealth Peace Harbor Hospital
- Pioneer Memorial Hospital – Heppner
- Pioneer Memorial Hospital – Prineville
- Providence Hood River Memorial Hospital
- Providence Seaside Hospital
- Saint Alphonsus Medical Center – Baker City
- Samaritan Lebanon Community Hospital
- Samaritan North Lincoln Hospital
- Samaritan Pacific Communities Hospital
- Southern Coos Hospital & Health Center
- St. Anthony Hospital
- St. Charles Madras
- Tillamook Regional Medical Center
- Wallowa Memorial Hospital
- West Valley Hospital

Rural Hospitals

There are 32 small and rural hospitals in Oregon, they include all CAHs plus these seven:

- Asante Ashland Community Hospital
- Mid-Columbia Medical Center
- Providence Newberg Medical Center
- Saint Alphonsus Medical Center – Ontario
- Santiam Memorial Hospital
- Silverton Health
- St. Charles Redmond