



February 17, 2014

House Committee on Health Care

Chair Greenlick and members of the committee,

Oregon Society of Physician Assistants (OSPA) thanks you for considering Senate Bill 1548, which would update some of Oregon's statutes to include physician assistants (PAs) and nurse practitioners (NPs) in order to accurately reflect current practice and avoid confusion. OSPA urges you to support and pass SB 1548.

Oregon Society of Physician Assistants is a professional organization representing Oregon's PAs. There are more than 1,300 licensed PAs in Oregon, a number that has nearly doubled since 2007. PAs fill an important role in increasing access to health care, and the Affordable Care Act recognizes them as one of three primary care providers, along with physicians and nurse practitioners.

SB 1548 is a housekeeping bill. It is not meant to expand the scope of or extend new privileges to PAs and NPs. The threshold question we asked when writing this bill was, "Can PAs and/or NPs already do this?" If the answer was yes, but statute didn't reflect that reality, we chose to update the statute. OSPA pursued these changes because over the last two years, our organization has received an increasing number of reports of confusion over what a PA can or can't do, and whether Oregon's statutes and rules specifically allow a PA to practice in a certain setting or perform a certain function.

For example Section 73, dealing with the Family Leave Act, adds PAs to the list of providers who can sign a medical verification. The Family Leave Act, ORS 659A.150, lists 12 other providers. In this instance, an employer could reject an employee's medical verification if it was signed by a PA, even if the PA was the employee's primary care provider.

OSPA wants to prevent any situation where a misunderstanding of Oregon's statutes leads to a delay or denial of medical care for a patient, or where a PA or NP needs to spend any extra time working with someone to explain the laws instead of seeing patients.

OSPA is grateful for the collaboration from the Oregon Nurses Association and Oregon Medical Association in writing this bill. We urge your support.

Thank you.