

March 4, 2015

Senate Committee on Health Care
c/o Senator Laurie Monnes Anderson, Chair
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Chair Monnes Anderson and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on SB 608, relating to palliative care. Collectively, we are writing in support of the bill, as it begins the dialogue around addressing barriers to palliative care for hospitals and health systems across Oregon.

While many think of palliative care only in terms of end-of-life, hospice-oriented care, palliative care is appropriate at any age and at any stage of a serious illness, and its application and potential impact are much broader. Palliative care is focused on providing patients with relief from the symptoms, pain and stress of a serious illness – whatever the diagnosis, with the goal of improving quality of life for both the patient and the family.

Over the past ten years, hospitals across the country have seen the benefits in establishing palliative care programs, which yield better quality patient care and family satisfaction at lower cost. Evidence-based research has shown that patients in hospital systems with palliative care programs experience reduced emergency room visits, fewer days in intensive care and fewer hospital readmissions after discharge. Additionally, studies have shown that early access to palliative care for seriously ill patients can in some cases even prolong patients' lives.

Although there has been considerable growth in the number of hospital-based palliative care programs in Oregon and across the country, there are still barriers that have prevented all patients and families facing a serious illness from having access to palliative care services.

SB 608 is the first step in addressing the barriers that inhibit palliative care delivery in Oregon, by establishing an interdisciplinary advisory committee which will focus on the challenges of palliative care providers and patients, and provide for improved best practice sharing among palliative care programs in the state. Additionally, the consumer information piece will ensure that more Oregonians have access to information about palliative care and how it could benefit them.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our comments in support of SB 608.

Sincerely,



Andi Easton
Associate Vice President of Government Affairs and Advocacy
Oregon Association of Hospitals and Health Systems