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Oregon Chapter, American College of Emergency Physicians (O.C.E.P)

Testimony before the House Health Care Committee

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HB 2948, disclosure of health-related information

Chair Greenlick and members of the committee, my name is Katy King and I'm here today representing OCEP, the Oregon Chapter of the American College of Emergency Physicians. OCEP is a medical society that has represented physicians specializing in emergency medicine since 1971 and its members share a commitment to improve emergency healthcare for all Oregonians.

OCEP supports House Bill 2948. This bill allows physicians to share health-related information in certain circumstances, with family members involved in the care of a person in mental health crisis, without subjecting the health care provider to civil liability.

Stabilizing patients in mental health crisis are an increasing part of emergency medical practice. Emergency departments (EDs) have become the safety net for a fragmented mental health infrastructure which is experiencing critical shortages in services in all sectors. ED's must safely, humanely, and in a culturally and developmentally appropriate manner, manage patients of all ages with undiagnosed and known mental illnesses and behavioral health issues. To provide optimal care, OCEP supports a patient-centered, family-focused and team oriented approach to care for people in mental health crisis.

The emergency medicine physician's principal legal and ethical responsibility is to patients who present to be seen and treated in the emergency department. While OCEP believes the physician-patient relationship requires the confidentiality of protected health information to be maintained, this bill outlines certain reasonable exceptions (incapacity, emergency circumstances) where professional judgment

may be used to allow disclosure of health-related information. These circumstances must always align with the best interests of the person seeking care.

In summary, HB 2948 is a reasonable approach to protect the health and safety in certain situations for people in mental health crisis. Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I'd be pleased to answer any questions.