



Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 891

March 25, 2015

Senate Health Care Committee

Sarah Baessler

Director of Health Policy and Government Relations
Oregon Nurses Association

Chair Monnes Anderson and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Oregon Nurses Association, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of Senate Bill 891, which increases transparency in health care pricing.

The Oregon Nurses Association is Oregon's oldest and largest nursing union and professional association, and is proud to represent more than 13,000 registered nurses, advanced practice nurses and nursing students in Oregon. Oregon nurses make up the largest segment of Oregon's health care work force and work in nearly every health care setting, from large hospitals to small local clinics, from corrections to school-based health centers and in community-based public health.

ONA has long supported Oregonians' right to make informed health care decisions. To make informed decisions, consumers must have access to basic facts like the cost of health care services. Currently, there is little transparency around the costs of these services and different facilities may have a wide variation in negotiated rates with payers, and therefore a patient's out of pocket expenses may vary dramatically depending on where they seek care.

In some instances emergencies leaves patient with no choice about where they seek care, but for other procedures patients do have a choice and making cost information available will help patients make informed decisions. While cost may not be the only factor in patients' health care decisions, keeping it hidden from consumers doesn't serve patient needs or the public interest.

Arming consumers with knowledge about health care prices can decrease patients' stress and reduce the amount of bankruptcies and financial hardships caused by our health care system. SB 891 requires the actual negotiated rate of a procedure to be disclosed, and also requires the facility to provide an estimate to a patient for less common procedures, and requires that estimate be based on that particular patient's insurance coverage. This data serves a real purpose and gives consumers practical and useful information.

Just as consumers compare prices when making other purchases, it is appropriate for Oregonians to have clear information about the costs of health care before they undergo a procedure. Additionally, uncertainty about health care costs may deter patients from seeking needed care.

Transparency improvements like this help consumers better understand health care costs and, over time, may lead to lower costs for everyone.

ONA encourages your support of SB 891.