

April 6, 2015

Representative Mitch Greenlick, Chair
House Committee on Health Care
Oregon Legislative Assembly

Re: HB 3378

Chair Greenlick and Members of the Committee:

OSPIRG supports HB 3378. This legislation is an important step toward building a health care delivery system that treats the patient as a whole person and provides the needed supports for the critical role of family caregivers in keeping Oregonians healthy and out of the hospital.

Family caregivers are important members of a patient's health care team. On a day to day basis, without compensation, family caregivers help patients recover from injuries and illnesses, and manage chronic conditions, providing care worth the equivalent of billions of dollars a year in Oregon alone, and immeasurably improving patients' quality of life.

Yet family caregivers do not always receive the support they need to play this role effectively. Most family caregivers receive little or no training in performing the tasks expected of them, which can sometimes be difficult and complex, such as wound care and medication management. Without adequate support, family caregivers may be unable to provide the level of care necessary to keep patients out of expensive health care facilities, contributing to rising health care costs for families, businesses and the state budget.

HB 3378 takes some important steps to ensure that family caregivers are better-equipped to perform the difficult but necessary work they do. Identifying family caregivers in patients' medical records and notifying designated caregivers of a pending discharge are simple, common-sense steps to ensure appropriate coordination of patient care. Ensuring that hospitals implement policies to inform family caregivers about the key medical tasks they will be expected to perform will put those caregivers in a better position to provide the appropriate care that will keep patients out of the hospital.

As Oregon continues its efforts to transform the delivery of health care to improve care, improve outcomes and reduce costs, family caregivers should be an important part of the conversation. Empowered family caregivers can not only help provide post-discharge care, they can also play an important role in coordinating care and addressing upstream causes of illnesses and accidents to prevent the need for expensive medical interventions altogether.

HB 3378 is an important step in the right direction, and we urge your support.

Thank you for your consideration.

Jesse Ellis O'Brien, OSPIRG Health Care Advocate