



Testimony in Support of HB 2047

Chris Hewitt
March 6, 2017

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bill 2047. I am here on behalf of the Oregon Nurses Association in support of this bill. With 15,000 members working in nearly every healthcare setting across the state, ONA nurses are committed to ensuring that our state's hospitals are providing a clear level of genuine community benefit that expands access to care and improves outcomes.

There is still a clear need for more deliberate charity care today to help maintain continuing affordable access to primary and preventative care services, particularly for some of our state's most vulnerable populations. The passage of the Affordable Care Act led to millions more being insured under Medicaid and private insurance plans, and less need for hospitals to provide previously charitable care—what was once uncompensated care is now covered. Across all Oregon hospitals, charity care costs dropped 35% from 2013 to 2014, while revenues soared.

Oregon's hospital profits increasing 87% over the past five years¹, ONA believes it's imperative that hospitals claiming property tax exemption be reinvesting a fair portion of these dollars back into the community to address critical health care needs. Despite the rise in our covered population, nurses frequently report caring for patients who are strained by unaffordable hospital expenses and mounting medical debt. Meanwhile, unreimbursed Medicare and Medicaid costs still account for the majority of hospital community spending benefit reported in recent years².

Currently, the specific community benefits that hospitals provide are limitedly tracked by the state and there is no minimum requirement specified in statute. Keeping exempt large facilities off of property tax rolls also limits funding for local public health programs our communities rely on- including infectious disease prevention and reproductive care services. HB 2047 will be an important step toward improved transparency around the use of tax exemptions that our hospitals receive and also establishing a clear requirement for a percentage of gross patient revenue be spent on charitable investment to promote the overall health of our communities.

Oregon's nurses play a vital role in working to provide quality patient care and maintain public our health. However, fulfilling the promise of successful outcomes is greatly undermined when our hospital systems do not take a meaningful enough role in investing profits back into our communities and helping ensure robust access to needed services.

For these reasons, ONA urges your support for HB 2047.

¹ Oregon Health Authority Hospital Reporting. <https://www.oregon.gov/oha/analytics/Pages/Hospital-Reporting.aspx>. Accessed Mar. 5, 2017.

² Oregon Health Authority Hospital Reporting. <https://www.oregon.gov/oha/analytics/Pages/Hospital-Reporting.aspx>. Accessed Mar. 5, 2017.