

3/13/2017

To the Oregon House Committee on Health Care:

Regarding HB 2373, please add Pharmacists to the list of providers eligible for the Rural Practitioner Tax Credit.

There are many reasons to add Pharmacists to the list of medical professionals eligible for the Rural Practitioner Tax Credit. Pharmacists are highly trained medical professionals that can greatly influence the efficiency and cost of healthcare, while filling critical healthcare needs.

Training: Pharmacists now are required to earn a doctoral degree. Many pharmacists also complete one or two years of residency or have special certifications to provide expanded capabilities for patient care. This special knowledge base significantly can improve the cost effective care of patients. In fact, pharmacists receive years of didactic and experiential training and medication therapy where all other healthcare professionals generally receive less than 1 year of training on medication therapy.

Professionals: Pharmacists are the "most trusted" or second most healthcare professional depending on which poll you reference. The point is, pharmacists are more trusted than any of the healthcare professionals already included in the Rural Practitioner Tax Credit.

In the last few years, pharmacists have been legally defined as "Providers" in HB2028 and HB2879, which to my knowledge, makes Pharmacists the only "Providers" in Oregon not included in the Rural Practitioner Tax Credit.

Also, pharmacists are now prescribing medications to patients birth control through HB2879, naloxone through HB4124, vaccinations and collaborative drug therapy management through OAR855-019.

Rural Healthcare: Oregon, appears to value improving healthcare in rural Oregon as seen through many different initiatives Rural Practitioner Tax Credit, Oregon Health & Science University(OHSU)- Campus for Rural Health, etc. Recruiting and training healthcare professionals in rural Oregon has a number of challenges professionally and personally.

Professional challenges in the rural setting are about access to timely diagnostics, specialty care, medications, collaborative support, and even essentials like utilities...all of which are more challenging in a rural vs. urban environment.

Personal challenges for professionals in the rural setting include travel time/cost along with many access issues shopping, education, entertainment, and other community related factors not available in small communities.

I am unsure of the financial impact of adding pharmacist to the Rural Practitioner Tax Credit, but since the vast majority of pharmacist practice pharmacy on the I-5 corridor and other urban areas, I would assume it is small. I would also assume it is smaller than the cost of an OHSU- Campus of Rural Health and many other initiatives to improve healthcare in the rural setting. The Oregon Board of Pharmacy, that has addresses of all practicing pharmacist, should be able to easily provide the cost implications. But, I would suggest that the cost of adding pharmacist to the tax credit, could easily be offset by preventing a few unnecessary hospitalizations through improved medication therapy or adverse drug events prevention.

Please support adding pharmacist the Oregon Rural Tax credit that will help recruit and retain well-qualified pharmacist to help provide healthcare in rural Oregon.

Sincerely,



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