

SB 81 Testimony
Andy Smith, Association of Oregon Counties
Veterans Policy Manager
March 13, 2017

AOC strongly supports SB 81.

County Veterans Service Officers (CVSO's) are highly trained, highly effective advocates for veterans who file "compensation and pension" claims on behalf of Oregon veterans.

- Over 70,000 veterans received federal "compensation and pension" benefits in 2015 that totaled \$1.3 billion.

An almost equally large set of VA health care services/benefits flow into Oregon each year.

- Over 100,00 veterans received VA health care services in 2015 that totaled \$1.2 billion.

Our CVSO's are experts and specialists in getting compensation and pension benefits. However, many of our CVSO's simply do not have the time or detailed level of familiarity and experience needed to be able to help veterans effectively access health care, whether it be through the VA or state/local healthcare systems. There are many aspects of healthcare that combine to make it a very challenging system to get into initially, including transportation hurdles, wait times, administrative coordination, payment coordination, specialist access and other issues.

Veterans often need extra assistance to effectively access and coordinate their medical care, often at the beginning of their care episodes or at critical points of care when vets are moving between multiple services, including mental health.

AOC supports SB 81 as general concept to begin development of a more strategic ways to help veterans access and use health care services, whether this be through a "health care navigator" model or other approaches.

Total 2015 VA Expenditures Coming into Oregon = \$2.6 billion

= \$1.3 billion for compensation and pension (current, proven CVSO model)

= \$1.2 billion for healthcare (new opportunity to expand under SB 81)