

Dear Chair Williamson and Members of the House Rules Committee:

On behalf of the Center for Autism and Related Disorders (CARD), I submit this letter in opposition to HB2342 as amended, which would give the director of DCBS unchecked authority to waive state laws that govern Oregon's health insurance policies.

CARD is the world's largest provider of evidence-based autism treatment and the nation's third largest non-governmental organization contributing to autism research. CARD has 134 locations in 25 states, with six locations in Oregon. With the help of clarifying bulletins on mental health parity and the roll out of Oregon's autism benefit for Medicaid beneficiaries, Oregon's autism community has begun to see access to autism treatment providers gradually grow to meet its needs. The proposed amendments give DCBS what appears to be unilateral authority to block the laws so thoughtfully crafted by this Oregon's legislators.

Since I am certain that you are hearing from your constituents in the autism community who would personally suffer the effects of this legislation, I will use this platform to echo their concerns and to express the concerns for the business growth that Oregon's statutory framework has facilitated. These amendments have the potential to create uncertainty in a business market that is flourishing. CARD alone has created over 100 jobs in Oregon in the last three years, and our rate of growth is increasing. Of course, such business growth has required a substantial investment, which CARD has made only after a careful analysis of the needs of Oregonians and the laws in place to meet those needs. The passage of these amendments would upend the stability of Oregon's current statutory framework to the point where health care providers may find it necessary to move to neighboring states to safeguard their businesses.

Changes to Oregon's insurance law should be the product of this deliberative body, not the whim of DCBS. While we are all cognizant of the fluidity of federal health law in the midst of Republican efforts to repeal the Affordable Care Act, no changes have yet been made. Furthermore, current legislation – if it were to pass and be signed into law – would not take effect immediately. On behalf of CARD, we respectfully urge you to vote no on HB2342 as amended.

Respectfully submitted,

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