



OREGON PSYCHIATRIC
PHYSICIANS ASSOCIATION

Date: February 7, 2018

To: The Honorable Laurie Monnes Anderson, Chair
The Honorable Alan DeBoer, Vice-Chair
Members of the Senate Health Care Committee

From: Bennett Garner, MD
Oregon Psychiatric Physicians Association

RE: Position statement on SB 1539, OPAL Expansion

Chair Monnes Anderson, Vice Chair DeBoer and members of the Senate Health Care Committee:

The Oregon Psychiatric Physicians Association (OPPA), a district branch of the American Psychiatric Association, was established in 1966. OPPA serves as the organization for medical doctors (psychiatrists) in Oregon working together to ensure humane care and effective treatment for persons with mental illness, including substance use disorders, and compassion for their families.

OPPA supports SB 1539, which would expand OHSU's highly successful Oregon Psychiatric Access Line for Kids (OPAL K) to include the adult and geriatric population.

This model enables enhanced access to the psychiatric experts and allows primary care providers to provide more optimal care outside of traditional psychiatric settings. It would improve mental health care and access, especially in rural areas, and especially for the older Oregonians suffering from chronic mental illness.

In Oregon, untreated and poorly treated mental illness and limited access to behavioral health services are major issues that lead to significant financial, social and illness burdens on individuals and communities. Concern about access to effective behavioral health services remains a looming problem which can be addressed by a number of proposals, including expansion of the OPAL K program.

OPPA respectfully requests the committee to support SB 1539 and commends Sen. Monnes Anderson and the committee for strong leadership on this critical bill to expand access to quality evidence-based mental health care services.

Oregon Psychiatric Physicians Association

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