



ASSOCIATION OF OREGON COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAMS
For more information contact Cheryl Ramirez at 503-399-7201

Testimony in support of SB 1539
Oregon Psychiatric Access Line for Adults

February 7, 2018

Dear Chair Monnes Anderson and Members of Senate Health Care,

The Association of Oregon Community Mental Health Programs (AOCMHP) strongly supports SB 1539, the adult extension of the successful Oregon Psychiatric Access Line for children (OPAL K). OPAL A is certainly one pathway to integrated physical and behavioral health care as an efficient use of centralized psychiatric consultation for primary care providers who prescribe mental health medications for individuals whose needs are best met in a primary care medical home.

OPAL A does not, however, replace access to specialty behavioral health care and professionals who serve individuals with a wide range of needs from mild to chronic mental health and substance use disorders. To this point, we want to correct what we believe to be an inaccurate statement in the “Whereas” clauses introducing the bill: “Whereas Oregon has historically ranked low in the nation for access to mental health services...” The 2018 Mental Health America report, a one-page description of which is also in OLIS, ranks Oregon actually much higher than most states for access to mental health and substance use services. This clarification in no way negates the need for OPAL A and the support it will provide to primary care providers and their patients throughout the state.

We urge you to support SB 1539, which will help people whose mental health services are provided by their primary care providers.

Sincerely,

Cheryl L. Ramirez

Cheryl L. Ramirez
Director, AOCMHP