



February 6, 2018

Testimony in support of Senate Bill 1549

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

My name is Jim Sechrist and I oversee nine mental health programs in the state for Telecare Mental Health Services of Oregon. Funded primarily through Medicaid, we serve adults diagnosed with a severe and persistent mental illness in both outpatient and inpatient settings and many of those individuals enter our programs directly from Oregon State Hospital.

I write in support of Senate Bill 1549. In the challenging health care funding environment we have today, providers look to improve efficiency in the delivery of services to reduce cost and improve outcomes. SB 1549 would reduce the administrative burden on community providers by eliminating the need to reestablish Medicaid benefits for most individuals discharging from Oregon State Hospital (OSH). Each benefit reinstatement that takes place in the community can consume hours and sometimes days of clinician time. Less time wasted on establishing benefits translates into more time spent on treatment, making us more effective and ultimately reducing cost.

Maintaining Medicaid benefits for individuals admitted to OSH for 12 months would also help providers, case managers, family members, guardians, and representative payees track eligibility requirements reducing the number of individuals who become ineligible for benefits for technical reasons while at OSH. For example, after returning to Telecare from OSH, a current patient was deemed ineligible for Medicaid for technical reasons despite being a recipient of Medicaid before her admission to OSH. It has been over 30 days and her benefits have still not been reinstated despite the efforts of 10 people in 9 agencies working on the issue. In the month since discharge, the patient has relied on public funds to remain in our program and has been denied admittance to a substance abuse treatment program because of a lack of Medicaid. All of this would have been avoided if the patient could have maintained Medicaid coverage while in the state hospital.

Again, I would like to express Telecare's support for SB 1549 to improve efficiencies in the system and provide better care to those we serve.

Thank you,

Jim Sechrist, MA  
Regional Director of Operations  
Telecare Mental Health Services of Oregon