



OREGON ACADEMY OF FAMILY PHYSICIANS

February 11, 2020

I write to you on behalf of 1700 family physicians, residents and students to express concern about the recent executive order to discontinue non-emergent outpatient services, and the impact of such an order on the continued ability of primary clinics to stay afloat as this crisis unfolds. Oregon's primary care physicians need immediate clarity on the meaning of the order, and clear definitions of what constitutes emergent care, and what does not.

We recognize that these are unprecedented times, and that unprecedented measures will be required from the entire healthcare system to confront the COVID-19 pandemic. However, we urge the Executive Branch, the Oregon Health Authority and the Legislature to consider the impact that reducing non-emergent services will have on providers and the public. Primary care clinics have capacity to take the burden off emergency departments for minor, urgent care, but they cannot do so without adequate PPE supplies.

Currently, physicians do not have clear guidance about where to send patients who need care for respiratory illnesses, and so they are still triaging these patients and testing them in primary care settings when they can.

Clinics are already struggling to stay open as their fee-for-service patients are canceling or they are clearing their schedules to be able to handle expected increased volume for COVID-19 patients. They must remain financially viable to be able to help when the true surge hits.

Oregon has a financial lever to help clinics navigate these times, and that is to require private insurance carriers, including Medicare Advantage plans, to cover telemedicine and telephonic care. Doing so will help Oregon avoid a massive backlog of delayed preventive care, and help clinics stay afloat as the impact of COVID-19 becomes clearer.

Thank you for all you are doing to navigate this crisis.

Respectfully,

Betsy Boyd Flynn
Executive Director
Oregon Academy of Family Physicians