



January 28, 2019

Oregon State Legislature
Senate Committee on Health Care
900 Court St. NE
Salem Oregon 97301

Re: Senate Bill 140 – Emergency Department Boarding Prevention Pilot Funding and Task Force

Chair Laurie Monnes Anderson, Vice Chair Linthicum and members of the Senate Committee on Health Care:

My name is George Aikin, RN, and I am the nurse manager of the psychiatric medicine center at Salem Health. Salem Health is a community health system, with a 454 bed acute care hospital and level II Trauma Center located in Salem and a small rural hospital located in Dallas, Oregon, and primary care and specialty clinics. Salem Health primarily serves Marion and Polk counties.

Emergency departments often become the go-to location for people in the community facing hardship, regardless of what type of care they need. Some people use the emergency department whenever they encounter a crisis, even when it might not be a health care crisis. We are passionate about taking care of people, period. But our staff are often met with angry responses from families who expect solutions to problems that are outside the scope of a hospital's care. Our emergency department can fill with people who are experiencing a housing or placement crisis, and don't need emergency medical attention.

One of the root causes of this problem is a lack of resources or appropriate placements for these individuals. Some people remain in the emergency department for multiple days and in some extreme cases weeks as they wait for any type of relief from systems in the community.

While we do not have all the answers, we know that given the resources and opportunity, partnerships between hospitals and their communities can be a powerful and innovative way to address these problems. Solutions developed in one community can be replicated in others.

Beyond innovation we feel that convening a task force to provide recommendations to the legislature would not only highlight areas of concern but would be a safe table to produce recommendations for regional and statewide solutions.

Salem Health supports SB 140 which would allow hospitals and communities to pilot innovative solutions for patients who board in an emergency department when there is no place for them to be safely released.

Respectfully,

George J. Aikin, BSN, RN
Nurse manager
Psychiatric medicine center
Salem Health