



Senate Committee on Health Care
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

January 29, 2019

Re: Support for SB 140 and SB 141

Dear Chair Monnes-Anderson, Vice-Chair Linthicum and members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to voice our support for Senate Bill 140, which Establishes an Emergency Department Boarding Pilot Project in the Oregon Health Authority, and establishes a Task Force on Emergency Department Boarding, and also Senate Bill 141 that establishes a statewide mental health crisis support access line.

As a coalition of 7 coordinated care organizations, our member CCOs together serve over 400,000 Oregon Health Plan members. Often those members are some of the most vulnerable and susceptible to hardship among our represented populations. We know that emergency departments are often over utilized as a place of last resort for those experiencing crisis— medical or other wise— and we feel strongly that this program outlines in these two bills would allow communities the opportunity to address those over-utilizations in constructive, and cost-saving ways.

The overuse of emergency departments is one of the main components of unmanageable health care costs, and the ED is often accessed simply because there are no other alternatives. Too often, emergency department staff are met with social placement issues that are outside of their scope and ability to address. SB 140 would assist in addressing the needs of those who are currently seeking care in an emergency department for this reason, and SB 141 is an admirable first step in facilitating an effective program.

The Oregon Health Authority has highlighted the need to have an increased focus on behavioral health. SB 140 would give the piloted emergency departments the funding needed to work with localities to find appropriate placements for those experiencing behavioral health crises and SB 141 is a necessary tool for staff to be able to access pertinent placement information in a timely fashion.

It is especially of note that the anticipated amendment to SB 140 calls for at least one of the piloted projects be conducted in a rural or frontier area. We firmly believe that this is a necessary addition in order to address behavioral health on a state-wide level. Further, the creation of a statewide access line would ensure that EDs across Oregon would have access to the same support resources regardless of location. Additionally, the inclusion of three specific behavioral health care professionals to the proposed task force would increase the likelihood of deriving wholistic, clinically derived solutions for persons who would utilize these services.

We urge your “Aye” vote on SB 140 and SB 141, and appreciate the opportunity to support this exciting program.

Sincerely,

Mary Williams



Lobbyist
Coalition for a Healthy Oregon