

March 5, 2019

Re: House Bill 2014 – OAHHS Opposes

Chair Williamson and Members of the House Committee on Judiciary:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bill 2014. On behalf of Oregon's 62 hospitals and health care systems, and the patients and communities they serve, we oppose House Bill 2014.

HB 2014 is a troubling bill that would have a negative effect on the ability of Oregon hospitals to recruit and retain health care professionals, and which would place Oregon out of step with our neighboring states and the nation as a whole. Additionally, the bill directly undermines previous efforts to reduce medical liability costs and would increase both those system costs and costs across the entire health care system.

Oregon, like many states, is facing an increasing gap between the number of health care professionals available and the number needed to effectively care for its population. With only a single academic medical center in the state and limited opportunities for nursing education, Oregon, more than most states, relies heavily on its ability to attract and retain medical professionals. Removing the cap for wrongful death will significantly hinder the ability of Oregon providers to recruit into the state. Nationally Oregon is already more punitive than most states, currently allowing non-economic damages twice the \$250,000 limit in California.

The existing \$500,000 limit on non-economic damages is an appropriate threshold to maintain a predictable insurance environment for health care providers. Importantly, there is no limitation for recovery of proven economic damages such as lost income, lost earning capacity, loss of financial support, and other calculable harm. The limit at issue today is a purely punitive amount that has the net effect of making providers less willing to practice in Oregon and to practice expensive, defensive medicine when they do remain.

HB 2014 is an unnecessarily punitive piece of legislation that will increase costs and reduce access to health care for generations of Oregonians. We urge this committee to oppose.

Thank you for your consideration. Please let me know if you have any further questions

Sincerely,

Drew Hagedorn
Government Affairs Representative
Oregon Association of Hospitals and Health Systems