



March 5, 2019

Members of the Oregon House Judiciary Committee

**Re: Opposition to HB 2014 from rural healthcare providers**

Chair Williamson and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to submit these comments on behalf of the Douglas County Independent Physicians Association (DCIPA). Our 101 physicians, specialists and clinicians provide care for thousands of Oregonians in our community and we are concerned about the impact of this legislation on rural providers in independent practice.

Our members would be among those most impacted by the change proposed in HB 2014. Insurance premiums for medical malpractice are a substantial expense for physicians in private practice. These costs play a major role in a practitioner's decision to locate their practice. Many are drawn to urban centers because they can make more money with a larger patient community, deepening the provider shortage in our rural communities.

The statutory limit on damages for pain and suffering in malpractice proceedings is an important tool for managing healthcare costs. The limit provides certainty for medical professionals and their insurance providers, and the benefits of these lower costs reduce the overall cost burden on patients. For the first time in many years, the costs of medical malpractice insurance premiums are stable. I attribute much of this to the legislature's decision to maintain the limit.

Our profession has faced many hurdles in recent years. In addition to these debates over the medical malpractice limits, the legislature has reduced the availability of the rural practitioner tax credit and is currently considering proposals to raise taxes specifically on providers in private practice. The collective burden of these policies is substantial and has resulted in some clinic owners deciding to sell their practices to corporate health systems.

As someone who actively recruits recent medical school graduates to begin their careers and raise their families in our rural community, I am greatly concerned about the impact of this bill on the rural provider shortage. I ask the legislature to consider the collective impact of the policies affecting providers. The decisions made in Salem play a critical role in our ability to recruit new practitioners to our communities and to provide care at an affordable price.

I respectfully ask you to oppose this bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bart Bruns", written over a white background.

Bart Bruns, MD  
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*Serving the needs of physicians and their patients in Douglas County.*