



Testimony in Support of House Bill 3076

May 13, 2019

House Committee on Rules

Deborah Riddick

Good afternoon Chair Holvey, Vice Chairs Williamson and Wilson, and members of the committee. My name is Deborah Riddick. I am the Director of Government Relations for the Oregon Nurses Association (ONA). We represent 15,000 registered nurses throughout the state and the Nurse Practitioners of Oregon. The ONA supports HB 3076 which would more accurately access community benefit allocation in support of community needs.

Our nurses, throughout the state, proudly provide a disproportionate amount of healthcare services, in and out of traditional facilities. We are, in many instances, the translators of community need and values. As care providers, case managers, and patient advocates, nurses witness the negative impact economic instability and insufficient community resources have on health outcomes. We also are acutely aware of the need for community benefits guidelines that more accurately address the needs of an increasingly more complex patient population. HB 3076 provides a framework that more appropriately balances the interests of both our hospitals and the patients they serve.

The ONA believes that meaningful financial assistance programs are the backbone of community benefits and that patients' rights and billing transparency are a widely recognized best practice. We also believe that the counting Medicaid discounts, relative to community benefit, demonstrates an inconsistency since private insurance discounts aren't typically counted. In the interest of cost-containment, it is simply sound business practice to determine insurance and assistance eligibility rather than invest manhours in pursuing uncollectable health care debt.

The original expectation of community benefits, as a charity care offset, has evolved alongside the understanding that healthy communities require strategic planning, resources and partnerships. And it's important to remember that the industry's tax-exempt status reduces revenue that the State would, otherwise, collect to address many of the qualifying offsets, in furtherance of its public health responsibility. HB 3076 is the product of years of collaboration and supports transparency and accountability improvements as a compliment to federal law. As a result, ONA supports the provisions outlined in HB 3076.