

February 3, 2020

Oregon State Legislature
Senate Committee on Mental Health
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

Re: Senate Bill 1553 – Assessment on Barriers to Behavioral Health Treatment

Chair Roblan and members of the Senate Committee on Mental Health:

On behalf of Oregon's 62 community hospitals and the patients they serve, the Oregon Association of Hospitals and Health Systems (OAHHS) supports SB 1553. OAHHS supports the evaluation of barriers to effective and timely behavioral health treatment for individuals with co-occurring disorders and the improving the registration of and access to peer support specialists and peer wellness specialists. OAHHS wants to ensure that as we expand the qualified behavioral health work force that is culturally and linguistically responsive, we do not lessen the highly qualified pool of providers.

Apprise Health Insights (OAHHS' data subsidiary) performed an in-depth review of behavioral health emergency department discharge claims in CY 2017 to determine the magnitude of the behavioral health crisis in Oregon. Substance use makes up 75% of the behavioral health emergency department visits compared to mental health at 25% (between 2015-2017). Many Oregonians struggle with mental health challenges and substance use disorders every day. Demands for behavioral health services have been growing at an alarming rate, both in Oregon and nationally. State and federal lawmakers, as well as policy makers, community and social service agencies, and health care providers are working together to define the problem and to implement solutions to mitigate it.¹

We appreciate the laudable intent of this legislation to assess and report on regulatory and policy barriers to effective and timely behavioral health treatment for individuals with co-occurring disorders. OAHHS supports strengthening behavioral health services at the state and local level. OAHHS supports the evaluation of barriers in hopes that it will further the work of the Governor's Behavioral Health Advisory Council and the other stakeholder groups that have joined together to develop solutions.

Thank you,



Andi Easton
Vice President of Government Affairs
Oregon Association of Hospitals and Health Systems

¹ [Behavior Health from Emergency Discharge Data in Oregon, Apprise Health Insights CY 2017.](#)