



November 15, 2021

Chair Prusak, Vice Chairs Hayden and Salinas, and Members of the House Interim Committee on Health Care:

On behalf of the Northwest Kidney Council, thank you for scheduling a work session to examine the health care workforce challenges Oregon is currently facing.

While daily media coverage has focused on frontline workers in hospitals treating COVID-19, the kidney care community has also been adversely impacted by this extreme disruption in the workforce. Below is a list of some of the main challenges we are experiencing:

- **Workforce turnover and retirement.** A 2021 Washington Post-Kaiser Family Foundation survey found that nearly 30% of health care workers are considering leaving their profession altogether, and nearly 60% reported impacts to their mental health stemming from their work during the COVID-19 pandemic. Similarly, kidney care workers around the state are experiencing unprecedented levels of turnover, as well as difficulty recruiting new workers.
- **Health care workforce migration.** The Urban Land Institute recently released the Merging Trends in Real Estate 2021 report which shows that every major metropolitan center on the West Coast has become an out-migration market. Competitive incentives and cheaper cost of living in other markets are attracting Oregon's health care workforce.
- **Delays in credentialing.** During this time of workforce shortages throughout the health care system, there is a need to examine the credentialing pipeline to improve timelines, address bottlenecks in the system and provide more streamlined recognition of out-of-state licensees.
- **Few pipelines of new kidney health care workers.** Garnering interest for new students to join the health care industry has become increasingly challenging. Additional outreach and education is needed to encourage more applicants into specialty areas such as kidney health care.

Despite the current challenges to Oregon's health care workforce, there are areas where progress can be made:

- **Invest in health care workforce training programs.** The state could boost its investments in workforce training programs to provide fellowships and loan forgiveness for future health care workers as well as health care faculty, such as nurses, who agree to become instructors.

- **Credentialing of health care workers.** State legislators should explore all options when it comes to speeding up credentialing times, including boosting Oregon Health Authority resources for additional staff, and streamlining the process for health care professionals licensed in other states.

Understanding kidney disease and the comprehensive continuum of care for the kidney care community can illuminate the extensive problems facing our health care workforce. We look forward to partnering with the Legislature to develop strategies to address challenges and invest in long-term solutions for a strong Oregonian healthcare workforce.

Please do not hesitate to reach out with any questions or requests. Thank you for considering the kidney community in conversations about health care workforce adequacy and state-based solutions to grow our next generation of care providers.

Sincerely,

James Adkins  
Northwest Kidney Council  
Director of Advocacy  
[james@nwkidneycouncil.org](mailto:james@nwkidneycouncil.org)

