

June 22, 2021

Dear Legislators,

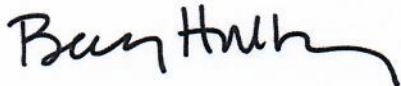
Since the beginning of the 2021 session, the Oregon Association of Hospitals & Health Systems has been concerned about the policy impacts of HB 2362 – mergers, acquisitions, and contracts – and the bill's significant effects on other health care initiatives and the overall health care landscape. The impacts of this far-reaching measure have not been well-vetted and understood, but the potential for negative consequences is significant. During the pandemic, this bill would have made it harder for hospitals and health systems to collaborate and innovate at a time when working together was essential for patient care. We simply do not know the downstream effects of this policy on the delivery of care for Oregon patients, given its negative impacts on the health care organizations that serve them, since this bill goes far beyond any existing laws in other states.

Given these overarching concerns, OAHHS has consistently opposed the bill and continues to do so. Nevertheless, through the leadership of the Senate President's office we engaged in conversations with SEIU to attempt to improve portions of the bill. We appreciate that SEIU considered changes to the underlying bill that mitigate some of the problematic provisions. While these changes have added clarity to certain sections, the bill's impacts are still not understood, key terms remain undefined and confusion around implementation remains. Quite simply, we continue to have significant concerns about the impact of the bill on health care system operations, the delivery of care and quality of care for Oregon patients, and the costs this will add to the health care system.

As the Legislature continues to deliberate, we feel an obligation to express to you in the strongest possible way that this bill is not ready. There is no urgency to pass this legislation, since the negative outcomes the proponents are concerned about have not occurred in Oregon. The Legislature faces the choice of passing untested policy with unknown consequences on health care delivery or making the prudent choice to support Oregon patients and Oregon's health care system by not proceeding with this legislation.

Thank you for your consideration. OAHHS staff and our member hospitals remain ready to answer any questions or have further conversations on this critical piece of legislation.

Sincerely,



Becky Hultberg
President/CEO