

April 24, 2021

Joint Committee on Ways and Means
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court St. NE
97301

Re: Support for SB 5529, Long Term Care & Medicaid Budget

Dear Co-Chair Johnson, Co-Chair Steiner Hayward Co-Chair Rayfield, and members of the committee,

The Marquis Companies include senior living and care options, such as assisted living facilities, memory care, post hospital care/skilled nursing, and more. We provide care to approximately 1,200 Oregonians across the state, 200 of those live in Congressional District 4, a majority of which receive care funded through Medicaid. The seniors we serve will grow exponentially as Baby Boomers age. I am writing to ask for increased investment in long term care services and supports in Oregon, and especially for supports to serve our low-income seniors. The Legislature has a unique opportunity to make transformational investments in long term care, our workforce, and the Oregonians we serve every day.

To keep up with simply the basic cost of care, the Legislature should fund a 5% cost-of-living-increase in the Medicaid reimbursement rate for each year of the biennium for community-based care providers, and fully “rebase” Medicaid rates to the 62nd percentile for skilled nursing facilities.

Basic cost-of-living-increases to Medicaid rates will help us continue to provide high quality care to our seniors. But the Legislature should also prioritize using a portion of federal aid from the American Rescue Plan Act as well as additional funds proposed from the enhanced Medicaid matching rate to make strategic investments in long term care. Those could include:

- **Extending the temporary 5% Medicaid rate enhancement for all long term care providers through the end of the pandemic will help us weather the impacts of the virus. The current rate enhancement will expire on June 30, 2021.**

- **Providing funding for long term care capital improvements to improve air quality in facilities, seismic upgrades, support infection prevention best practices for room configuration, and more.**
- **Making investments to help combat the workforce shortage in long term care and ensure providers have the resources needed to recruit and retain trained caregivers.**

Providers like Marquis Companies have been substantially impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic as we have maintained our standards of care in an unprecedented regulatory and clinical environment while serving highly vulnerable populations. We have supported residents and their families through the impacts of social isolation and uncertainty, while planning for increased costs of care, decreased revenues and census, PPE shortages, hazard pay and more. The last year has both created new issues within the long term care sector and exacerbated existing ones.

Now, we need the resources to come out the other side of COVID-19 resilient and prepared to serve the increased populations we expect to come into the long term care system in the next five to ten years. These population increases are most acute in rural Oregon.

Please don't miss this critical opportunity in the 2021-23 biennium to help the long term care sector come out of the last year more resilient and better prepared than when we entered it, ensure that Oregon families receive the quality care they deserve, accommodate incoming population increases in our state and make some of the most strategic investments at the state's disposal based on the infusion of federal dollars.

Sincerely,

April Diaz, RN, BS
Vice President Clinical Services
Marquis Companies