

I am a hospice and palliative care physician in Bend and see everyday the value palliative care provides both to patients and families dealing with serious illness as well as to our health care system. Numerous studies prove that palliative care not only improves quality of life for patients, but it also often results in longer length of life, increases patient satisfaction, lowers health care costs, and helps decrease caregiver burnout by helping support complex patients. The cost savings palliative care provides has been proven in all settings - hospital, home, skilled nursing facilities, and community-based clinics.

Palliative care should begin soon after the diagnosis of a serious illness, and should be provided along with curative or life-prolonging therapies. Palliative care is provided by a team of trained professionals including physicians, Nurse Practitioners, nurses, social workers, and chaplains, among others. Our expertise is treating symptoms related to serious illness, and the stress of being sick, including physical, emotional, and spiritual distress. We also spend time getting to know patients and what is most important to them, so we can help align treatments with their values and be sure they are getting the best care possible, which is different for all of us based on what we care about. We do this work through an interdisciplinary team, to address patients as a whole being and support the many faces of suffering as one deals with serious illness.

Our current health care system does not make it financially possible for a palliative care program to cover our expenses - we all lose money. The financial value of palliative care is in cost savings (fewer hospitalizations, ER visits, and interventions - patients choose to do less when they learn that these interventions will not help them meet their care goals). We are in desperate need for payment reform so that we can continue to support patients dealing with serious illness with expert palliative care.

HB 2981 will help support the important work we do by reimbursing home-based palliative care. We know the value provided by seeing frail patients in their home - better care, improved quality of life, lower health care costs, and improved patient/ family satisfaction. Please support this bill.