

February 19, 2021

The Honorable Rachel Prusak Chair, House Committee on Health Care
900 Court St. NE
Salem OR 97301

RE: Support for HB 2981

Dear Chair Prusak and members of the House Committee on Health Care,

Thank you for the opportunity to express support for HB 2981. Kaiser Permanente exists to provide high-quality, affordable health care services and to improve the health of our members and the communities we serve. We believe in a healthy and engaged life with good beginnings and dignified endings. Comprehensive palliative care is well established as an essential element in the care of people facing the challenges of serious life limiting illness.

HB 2981 will expand access to high quality comprehensive multi-disciplinary specialty palliative care services in Oregon. Therefore, Kaiser Permanente strongly supports this legislation including: the specified qualifications; the required elements of the interdisciplinary team approach to care; the location and suite of services to be provided; and the reimbursement for such services.

We also have concerns that two elements of the bill may result in unintended consequences. They are:

- **(1) c. “The patient may be at risk for frequent emergency department visits or frequent hospitalizations.”** We are concerned that this language could be interpreted to apply to patients with high ED utilization although **not otherwise appropriate** for referral to palliative care services; and conversely could result in limiting referrals to palliative care services for patients not seeking ED visits or hospitalizations while still being eligible and in need of home and community based palliative care. **Therefore, we recommend eliminating this language from the Bill.**
- **(4) b. “Advanced care planning including discussion regarding completion of a POLST, as defined in ORS 127.663;”** We recommend that a statement be added to this language which clarifies that the completion of a POLST and Advance Directives **is not required** to receive any and all available palliative care services for which the patient is otherwise eligible.

With these changes we believe this legislation will enhance the care of Oregonians with serious illness and improve end of life care in the communities we serve.

Sincerely,

Scott W. Smith MD
Palliative Medicine
Home Based Palliative Care