

February 6, 2023

Oregon State Legislature
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

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Chair Nosse and Members of the Committee:

The Oregon Association of Hospitals and Health Systems (OAHHS) is a mission-driven, nonprofit association representing Oregon's 62 community hospitals. Together, hospitals are the sixth largest private employer statewide, employing more than 70,000 employees. Committed to fostering a stronger, safer Oregon with equitable access to quality health care, OAHHS provides services to Oregon's community hospitals ensuring all are able to deliver dependable, comprehensive health care to their communities; educates government officials and the public on the state's health landscape; and works collaboratively with policymakers, community organizations, and the health care community to build consensus on and advance health care policy benefiting the state's 4 million residents.

Hospitals are more than just buildings; they are cornerstones within the communities they serve. Our hospitals are employers, partners in community projects, and community spaces—all while providing vital health services to generation after generation of families in communities across Oregon. We know that when our hospitals are strong, our communities win.

We appreciate the opportunity to support HB 2743, which would fund the continued work of the Oregon Medical Coordination Center (OMCC). The OMCC was created in August 2021 to enhance care coordination among hospitals and facilitate patient transfers as our communities faced the COVID-19 Delta surge. Housed within OHSU, the OMCC is a voluntary partnership between the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) and Oregon's six Regional Resource Hospitals.¹

The OMCC has been instrumental in ensuring access to hospital care across the state as the pandemic has evolved, as influenza and Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) surged, and as our communities faced the impacts of severe weather. When usual patient transfer procedures fell short, OMCC utilized the power of communication alongside the advanced insight provided by the Oregon Capacity System² to identify transfer opportunities and make them happen. Critical Access Hospitals, which serve rural areas of the state, have reported significant benefits in using the OMCC to transfer patients who need a higher level of care. This will be increasingly important when the federal Public Health Emergency ends in May 2023, as Critical Access Hospitals expect they will again be held to the 96-hour rule.³ During the recent pediatric respiratory virus surge, the OMCC focused on maximizing pediatric ICU

¹ The six Regional Resource Hospitals are: OHSU Hospital, Salem Hospital, Asante Rogue Regional Medical Center, St. Charles Bend, PeaceHealth Sacred Heart Medical Center at RiverBend, and Grand Ronde Hospital.

² More information about the Oregon Capacity System is available here: [Oregon Health Authority : Oregon Capacity System \(OCS\) Information : Health Alert Network \(HAN\) : State of Oregon](#).

³ To be designated as a Critical Access Hospital by CMS, a Medicare-participating hospital must maintain an annual average length of stay of 96 hours or less per patient for acute inpatient care (excluding swing-bed services and beds that are within distinct part units). More information is available here: [Critical Access Hospitals | CMS](#). The 96-hour rule has been waived during the federal Public Health Emergency.

bed capacity and was able to find in-state placements for the vast majority of infants and children who needed care. Most patients transferred through the OMCC process have been able to remain in or near their region, closer to loved ones and their communities than they otherwise may have been.

The funding requested in HB 2743 would support the OMCC in building a sustainable long-term infrastructure and ensuring the continuous availability of services 24 hours per day, seven days per week. The OMCC estimates that an average of 25 patients per day could benefit from OMCC coordination of their transfer. The OMCC of the future would be modeled on the highly successful Washington Medical Coordination Center⁴ and would continue to leverage the unique technology of the Oregon Capacity System. Funding the OMCC would represent a critical investment toward improving the continuum of care for Oregonians.

Thank you for the opportunity to engage on behalf of our members and the communities they serve.

Thank you,



Andi Easton
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Oregon Association of Hospitals and Health Systems

⁴ More information is available here: [Washington Medical Coordination Center \(WMCC\) - NWHRN](#).