



Providence Health & Services
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Portland, OR 97213
www.providence.org/oregon

February 6, 2023

The Honorable Deb Patterson
Chair, Senate Committee on Health Care
State Capitol
Salem, Oregon

Re: Senate Bill 486

Dear Senator Patterson and members of the committee,

Providence Health & Services in Oregon is a not-for-profit network of hospitals, health plans, physicians, clinics, home health services, long-term care facilities and affiliated health services. Providence is the largest health care provider in Oregon and one of the largest private employers in the state with more than 22,000 caregivers. The range of clinical services and facilities we operate statewide gives Providence a unique perspective about the challenges we face across the health care continuum.

Our hospitals and caregivers have been on the frontlines of the COVID-19 pandemic. It was our hope that after the Omicron surge in early 2022 we would begin to see an increase in hospital capacity, allowing us to take pressure off our acute care workforce, emergency rooms and Emergency Management Systems. To the contrary, the need for hospital services continues to increase and we reached an unprecedented capacity crisis this winter with the tripledemic.

In our experience, there are several factors that contribute to the capacity crisis: patients who delayed care during Covid are coming to hospitals with more complex needs and they require longer lengths of stay. Once they are ready to discharge from the hospital, the lack of community placement leaves them “stuck” in the hospital. This has led to increases in hospital average length of stay, ambulance diverts and boarding of admitted patients in the emergency department. The net impact is a reduction in the number of individual patients that can be seen in Oregon hospitals. In addition, prolonged admissions result in significant risks to patients including hospital-acquired infections, falls, delirium, emotional distress, and diminished quality of life.

For a long time, we have thought about hospital discharge as a singular issue, but the severity of the problem is creating a community wide crisis we cannot ignore. As such, Providence partnered with the Oregon Department of Human Services to analyze data and explore case examples to collectively determine barriers to discharge and to develop feasible solutions. While



our analysis is still in progress, we have found three areas for improvement: assessment process, cross-system communication, and rates.

The last two years have been incredibly challenging for the entire health care system, and it will take time to recover. Hospitals do not get paid for patients that no longer require acute care resources and staff but are stuck in the hospital awaiting a community placement. SB 489 will provide payment for hospitals to continue to staff and care for patients that have nowhere else to go. We are committed to continuing to partner with the state and legislators to develop community-based solutions that will provide the best care for patients in the most appropriate setting.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment; we hope the committee will join us in support of Senate Bill 486.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Melissa Damm".

Melissa Damm
Chief Financial Officer Oregon and Central Division
Providence Health and Services