

Submitter: Alisha Saultz
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Finance and Revenue
Measure: SB56

2/8/2023

SB 56

Good afternoon, Chair Meek, Vice-Chair Boquist and members of the committee. For the record, my name is Dr. Alisha Saultz and I am a Family Medicine physician with Northwest Primary Care. I practice in Oregon City and moved to Oregon in 2009 for the reason to practice medicine in this state that is known for its reputation of supporting full spectrum Family Medicine.

I am also here on behalf of the Oregon Independent Medical Coalition representing physician owned clinics and 1,600 providers in communities across the state. The coalition advocates for reasonable regulations and public policy for these health clinics to remain independent and serve tens of thousands of Oregonians with quality, affordable and accessible care.

I am here to register our support for SB 56 which would increase access to health care by exempting receipts from Medicaid, Medicare and other public assistance programs from the Commercial Activities Tax.

I am one of the 13 business owners of our physician led group. We employ 15 physicians and providers as well as approximately 200 employees. We serve just under 32,000 patients, 30% of which are Medicare, Medicaid. As a Family Medicine doctor, I like to say we serve our community in birth to death- often caring for multiple generations of the same family. I have delivered 300 babies since joining our group, much to the delight of many of my patients, who happen to also be their grandparents. I have near 1500 patients that call me their primary care physician: many I've been taking care of more than a decade now.

Thank you for drafting this legislation. We have found on our small business end, that unlike other businesses that can pass their costs onto their consumers, we are not able to do that due to fixed process of reimbursement that are set by insurance companies. In addition, when we see patients that are Medicare and Medicaid, their reimbursement rates are well below what it costs to care for these patients. Because of this we operate at a deficit to see these patients. This has resulted in putting the smaller independent health care clinics at financial risk by caring for these patients. Our goal in our group is to provide continuity of care for our patients. In order to do so we take as many insurances as possible so that patients may stay with their Primary Care Provider. For our Medicare and Medicaid population, this has become increasingly more difficult to do so due to rising business expenses, costs of care and decreasing reimbursement rates. I want to make sure that those of us who are seeing these patients are able to continue doing so and passing this bill helps us continue caring for our patients.

Both during and after COVID, we have had an exodus of healthcare personnel from our workforce. This has made access to care more difficult, and those of us left remain standing in the field exhausted. I am here today because it is important to me that our business be fiscally solvent and be able to pay our employees- the nurses, social workers, family doctors, NP and PAs that I work with every day to continue to take care of our population when healthcare has been the most challenging time of my career. This tax, while I commend its goals, have had the unintended side effect of putting even more restraint on our ability to keep our doors open and serving our patients. We simply ask for an exemption for the above public assistance plans so that we don't operate further in the negative by taking care of our most vulnerable patients.

Thank you,
Alisha Saultz, DO