

**Subject: Home Health is Critical to Releasing Pressure on Hospitals! Remove Home Health from HB 2697!**

Dear Representatives of the House Committee on Behavioral Health & Health Care:

Please support the amendment that removes home health from HB 2697. Home health is the answer to decreasing hospital capacity and freeing up beds and staff. This bill, as drafted, will only diminish home health's capacity, creating a further backlog in hospitals.

Hospital nursing and home health nursing have entirely different staffing models. 441.15x(2) of the bill states "The committee's primary goals in developing the staffing plan shall be to ensure that the service provider is staffed to meet the health care needs of patients." Like hospitals, home health agencies are already overwhelmed and facing significant workforce shortages. We are unable to compete with hospitals as many nurses are leaving home health for hospital positions that can offer higher wages, lower cost benefits and large sign-on bonuses.

The Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) already requires nurses to have staffing plans for every patient which is addressed through the 485 Plan of Care orders signed by the provider for frequency and duration which ensures that the care needs of the patient is met based on the acuity of the patient. **In collaboration with these orders is a national standard for all home health disciplines that defines a per day or per week productivity calculation.**

In addition to our workforce struggles, CMS is imposing a 4.2% payment cut to home health Medicare payment rates in 2023. Now is not the time to adopt tough new measures against home health providers. This bill would apply civil penalties to agencies that do not comply with the staffing plan. Many agencies in the state are small and operating at a loss. A minimum of \$10,000/day penalty is astronomical and fines of \$200 for missed rest or meal breaks creates a negative incentive.

**Home health agencies are the answer to hospital capacity issues. We are the "back door" for patients exiting the hospital. HB 2697 would only exacerbate home health capacity issues, force many home health agencies to close their doors, and reduce access to care to many Oregonians—and further jam up hospitals.**

Home Health does not belong in this bill. Please remove home health from HB 2697!

Sincerely,  
Lisa Drews-Lucero, Sky Lakes Director of Home Health