

March 3rd, 2025

Dear Chair Patterson, Vice-Chair Hayden, and Members of the Senate Committee on Health Care,

My name is Peter Merritt, and I am writing to you today on behalf of Portland-based nonprofit organization Project Access NOW to encourage you to support SB 951 and curb corporate influence in health care. Oregon has not been immune to the rise of private equity ownership of medical practices in our country, with investment rising 100,000% over the last decade from \$15 million to \$16 billion annually¹. Regulations intended to protect independent medical practices and patient care have weakened and loopholes have emerged that have allowed corporate influence to go unchecked. We are now faced with the opportunity to codify Oregon's longstanding values of patient-first health care and provider protection into law and reaffirm our commitment to banning corporate influence in health care.

As private equity investment in health care has risen, it's no secret that health care costs for patients have skyrocketed as a result. Last year, Project Access NOW paid over \$1,000,000 in health insurance premium support for individuals unable to afford their monthly insurance premium payments, assisted over 2,000 individuals with free or low-cost prescriptions, and coordinated over 1,500 donated primary and specialty care appointments for uninsured individuals unable to afford the exorbitant costs of seeking healthcare without insurance. It's clear that Oregonians are struggling with affordability more than ever, with health care spending in Oregon increasing 40% in just the last 8 years². Data shows that when providers maintain control of their practices, health care remains affordable for patients. When the health care delivery model places profits as the primary interest, corners are cut, and worse care for the patient is the result. Now is the time to ensure that decision-making in medical practices is left in the hands of clinical providers, free from profit-maximization interests.

SB 951 would tighten restrictions on medical practice ownership and ensure that licensed physicians maintain control over patient care in their practices. It would close loopholes in existing law to protect patients and

¹ Corporate Investors in Primary Care — Profits, Progress, and Pitfalls - New England Journal of Medicine

² Impact of Health Care Costs on People in Oregon, 2021 - Oregon Health Authority

providers and prevent non-physicians from influencing clinical decisions. This will result in better care for patients, lower health care costs, and give providers the agency they deserve as licensed medical professionals. Let's do the right thing for Oregon and stay ahead of the curve. Thank you for your important work on this matter, and we encourage you to support this essential legislation for all Oregonians.

Thank you,

Peter Merritt
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