

Dear Members of the Oregon Legislative Assembly,

I am writing to express my strong support for House Bill 3234, which seeks to empower the Attorney General to investigate and take legal action against health insurers engaging in anticompetitive practices that reduce access to healthcare in our state.

I grew up in Grants Pass, a rural town in Oregon, where both of my parents were dedicated healthcare professionals—my mother served as a nurse for 35 years, and my father was a phlebotomist. Their commitment to patient care instilled in me a deep understanding of the importance of accessible healthcare services.

Currently, I serve as the president of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Lane County; however, I am writing to you today in my personal capacity, not on behalf of any organization. Additionally, I volunteer with the Trauma Intervention Program (TIP), where I witness firsthand the devastating consequences of inadequate mental health resources. Far too often, I find myself in the heart-wrenching position of stepping into someone's grief, being present when parents are informed that their child has died by suicide or telling spouses that their partners will not be coming home.

This juxtaposition, between spending my days looking to expand mental healthcare access and seeing its life-changing effects when I do, and my nights lifting crime scene tape on another casualty of someone who's number wasn't called in time, is the light that should illuminate our support here. These issues are solvable and guide us to the conclusion: More access, more options, save lives.

Oregon has historically faced significant challenges in mental health care. In 2022, the state ranked 49th in the nation for mental health, with alarmingly high rates of anxiety, depression, and other mental health disorders. However, as of 2024, Oregon has made significant strides, moving up to 46th place; HB 3234 is a tool that will help get us closer to 1st place rather than slipping back.

Lane County, in particular, has been profoundly affected. Between 2000 and 2020, the suicide rate in our county increased by 80%, making it 65% higher than the national average. This alarming statistic underscores the urgent need for improved access to mental health services.

HB3234 represents a crucial step toward addressing these challenges by authorizing the Attorney General, in consultation with the Director of the Department of Consumer and Business Services, to investigate and bring actions against health insurers or their affiliates for violations of state antitrust laws. This measure aims to prevent monopolistic behaviors, business combinations that restrain trade, and practices that substantially reduce or eliminate competition within Oregon's healthcare markets.

By enacting HB3234, we can ensure that our healthcare system remains competitive and accessible, protecting the well-being of all Oregonians. This bill aligns with our commitment to uphold consumer protection and maintain a fair marketplace. I urge you to support HB3234 and take a stand against anticompetitive practices that threaten the quality and accessibility of healthcare in Oregon.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Daniel P. Isaacson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "D" and "I".

Daniel P. Isaacson