

Submitter: Jennifer Briggs
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Health Care
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB4075
To: Oregon State Treasurer and Legislature:

My name is Jennifer Briggs, and although I currently reside in the Willamette Valley, I have been a long-time resident of Coos County, where my parents, family and many dear friends still live. Rural healthcare in Coos County suffers from the same pressures that exist nationwide, except rural health tends to have fewer resources to work with. In a healthcare environment dominated by enormous companies, many of which are for-profit, small rural hospitals that are publicly owned are rare, at risk, and vitally important to their communities.

After the stresses of the COVID-19 emergency, small hospitals nationwide have closed, or worse, been bought out by private equity firms under the guise of "management services" only to have their assets depleted and the business left to bankruptcy. Bay Area Hospital, in Coos Bay, OR is one hospital that narrowly escaped that fate in 2025.

New management has a plan to stabilize the hospital. So far its efforts have been wildly successful, with strict cost control measures that have focused on keeping local residents employed and keeping all current service lines. The hospital is now on its way to turning around 4 straight years of financial losses. As one of the largest employers of the desperately economically challenged south coast, Bay Area Hospital houses the region's only Level III trauma center, the only cardiac cath lab, the only cancer treatment center, the county's primary treatment center for mental and behavioral health, and the only labor and delivery department. It also serves as a referral hospital to four critical access hospitals in the region, some of whose patients could travel 6 hours or more to get the health care they need if Bay Area Hospital has to cut its service lines to stay open. In the event that Bay Area Hospital has to cut services, it puts at risk 97 stable full-time positions, \$9.1M in revenue for the community, and it is estimated that 182 lives would be lost annually because of the difficulty in accessing needed health services. It also puts greater pressure on hospitals in Springfield, Eugene, Medford, Salem and Portland which are already overextended in caring for patients from their own service areas.

One of the major contributors to Bay Area Hospital's current financial predicament is debt that is currently held by a private, foreign bank. If the hospital could borrow money from the State of Oregon instead, it would make a huge difference to the financial health of the organization and give it the resiliency it needs to continue providing essential health services to the rural South Coast. Additionally, it would

keep debt payments inside the state rather than local money going to enrich a private bank in another country.

Please pass HB 4075, which would cost the state nothing, and protect the people of the south coast from an entirely preventable loss of vital healthcare services and employment.

Thank you for your consideration.