



# OREGON PSYCHIATRIC PHYSICIANS ASSOCIATION

## HB 3355: Unsafe prescribing and the risk to Oregon's mental health patients

**HB 3355 would allow for psychologists to prescribe drugs in the medical setting. Passage of the bill as written, would put patients at risk, allowing people with inadequate medical training to dispense powerful psychotropic medications to some of Oregon's most vulnerable patients.**

**FACT:** HB 3355 would create a new category of practitioners — the prescribing psychologist— but by definition it would also create a **new category of patient; the patient who can be prescribed drugs by a professional with minimal medical training.** We risk further stigmatization of patients with mental illness by making them the only patients who will receive medical treatment by practitioners who have not been trained in the complex ways in which the body functions. And yet, most psychiatric medications have serious side effects and risks, even risks that can lead to death and permanent disability.

**FACT:** No practitioner should be allowed to prescribe drugs unless they have met all of the educational and clinical training requirements of other non-physician medical professions that currently have the authority to write prescriptions, such as physician assistants and nurse practitioners.

**FACT:** This bill doesn't expand access — there already are mental health prescribers in the medical setting — but it masks the real problem; not all patients in the mental health arena have access to appropriate care and the legislature is right to address that issue.

**Here are ways in which the state has already expanded access:** The Oregon Psychiatric Physicians Association and partners have led or participated in, implementation of effective initiatives such as OPAL-K, telemedicine, CCOs, the Collaborative Care model, Physician Assistant training programs and supported other practice trends that increase access to mental health practitioners such as MDs, NPs, PAs and to mental health professionals, who can provide evidence-based psychotherapies that can be as effective as medications. We urge legislators to pursue strategies that have been proven to increase access to mental health care. OPPA is eager to support and assist in the implementation of these strategies.

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### RECOMMENDATION

We urge you to reject these proposals in favor of real reforms that improve access to safe, effective and integrated treatment of individuals who suffer from mental illness and other co-occurring conditions.

