

To: Chair Gelser and Members of the Senate Committee on Human Services

From: Lee Girard, Director, Aging, Disability and Veterans Services Division

Date: February 7, 2019

RE: Support for Senate Bill 177

February 7, 2019

Dear Chair Gelser and Members of the Senate Committee on Human Services,

I am writing in support of SB 177 to add licensed hospice programs to the list of health care agencies required to identify patients in need of palliative care and provide information to them about available services.

Oregon's Office of Economic Analysis predicts that 19.4 percent or nearly one in five of Oregon's population in 2030 will be 65 or older. That means more people will be living with chronic, life-limiting illnesses and require expert end-of-life care. We need to tap into our Oregon ingenuity so we can adjust our systems and policies to make the most of this new reality.

In Oregon, hospice eligibility requirements leave a gap in the care system for palliative care. A patient must have six months or less life expectancy and not be seeking curative treatment to receive hospice care. Palliative care fills this gap and can be provided in a person's home, or in an institutional setting. Referral to palliative care also helps prevent frequent emergency department visits and readmissions to a hospital.

This patient-centered, medical-care focus on providing symptom relief improves quality of life for the patient and their loved ones. I support your effort to improve the quality of life for all Oregonians and appreciate your work on SB 177.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lee Girard".

Lee Girard, Director
Aging, Disability, & Veterans Services Division