

Emerson Padua
Patient Care Technician
Oregon SB 900 Testimony
March 25, 2019

Dear Chairperson Monnes Anderson and Committee members,

I'm Emerson Padua, and I'm a dialysis Patient Care Technician in California. I've worked in the dialysis industry for over 22 years – including for a privately-owned dialysis facility and for the two largest companies, DaVita for 16 years and at Fresenius for 19 years.

When I started in dialysis it was all about patient care. We had one patient care tech for every three patients, so we had enough time to truly focus on our patients and we felt good about the care we were giving.

Dialysis workers like me see our patients for four hours a day, three days a week. Caring for them that way, over the years, it creates a bond that cannot be broken. We become a family.

As Davita and Fresenius started to take over the industry, gobbling up independent clinics and building more, I have seen a shift away from putting patient care first and towards putting profits first instead. I've seen how greed impacts this industry firsthand.

It means cutting staffing so fewer workers are taking care of more patients. Sometimes we only have two techs caring for 21 patients. And it means scheduling patients one right after the other, so there's less time for patients to recover, and less time to clean and prepare equipment between patients. Those kinds of changes have real consequences.

This American Kidney Fund scam is the prime example of this greed. It's not just squeezing profits out of workers and patients, but from all consumers of health insurance. Whether our patients have Medicare or private commercial insurance, they receive the same exact care – no more, no less. But these companies are gaming the system to charge an average of 350% above the cost of care for the same services.

And the American Kidney Fund stops paying patients' health insurance premiums shortly after a patient gets a kidney transplant. Right when they no longer need dialysis, but when they're at additional risk for health complications and have expensive anti-rejection drugs they need to take daily.

As a matter of fact, one of my patients, who I've cared for over the last seven years, just received a new kidney and pancreas. It was an amazing and joyful day! Sharing her excitement and her letdowns through the process was as important to me as it was to her.

Every time she got a call about a possible transplant, we would get excited, and then time after time it wouldn't come through, and she would be so upset and frustrated. We had to encourage her to hold on.

When she finally got her transplant, we were so excited and happy for her and her family. She couldn't wait to break the news to us. She called the clinic and thanked us for the love and support, and said she couldn't have done it without us. That's family.

That's why I support legislation in California similar to SB 900. Oregon and California must act collectively.

Healthcare is already too expensive for so many people. This is about allowing the healthcare market to work without unfair manipulation. We can't allow for-profit companies to use scams to drive costs up even higher.

SB 900 protects legitimate third-party payment mechanisms, removes the incentive to game the system for extra profits, and safeguards patients who have been caught up in one of these payment schemes.

And it still allows any entity to contribute to a charitable organization for the purposes of helping a patient pay for their coverage or care, it just prevents increasing their profits by making those contributions.

Oregon and California have an opportunity here to set a precedent in healthcare across the nation. Together we can protect dialysis patients and bring down costs for all healthcare consumers. That is why I'm here today in support of SB 900.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify. I, my dialysis co-workers, and my patients appreciate your time.

Sincerely,

Emerson Padua