



## **Testimony in Support of HB 4101**

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Oregon Nurses Association

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Chair Salinas and Members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of the Oregon Nurses Association in support of HB 4101 to expand access to care through telehealth services. The Oregon Nurses Association is Oregon's oldest and largest nursing union and professional association and is proud to represent over 15,000 registered nurses who work in almost every health care setting -- from large hospitals to small local clinics, from corrections to school-based health centers and in community-based public health. As such, ONA members continue to be deeply committed to making sure our most vulnerable patients are able to access care, regardless of their income, situation or where they live.

Currently, too many patients are not able to access providers or put off getting the health care they need because they are home-bound, have barriers to transportation, are struggling to manage behavioral health issues, or live in rural Oregon. Expanding the use of virtual care health services (both synchronously, e.g. eConsults, and asynchronously, e.g. virtual counseling sessions), has been proven to help address this by increasing access to primary and specialty care for safety net patients while yielding significant return on investments by reducing transportation costs, missed appointments, unnecessary referrals, emergency room visits and hospital admissions. This is part of the reason why Oregon modernized our policies in previous sessions on this issue for commercial payers and patients, but Medicaid was left behind.

HB 4101 helps fill this gap by requiring that the Oregon Health Plan cover a telehealth appointment for the same service that a patient could receive in-person by an Oregon-licensed provider. The bill also defines telehealth and provides statutory clarity that both synchronous and asynchronous virtual case services are covered.

Ultimately, HB 4101 helps close a health equity gap for underserved communities and expands patients access to see qualified providers across Oregon. We encourage you to support HB 4101 this session.