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Testimony of Arthur Towers
OTLA Political Director
In Support of Senate Bill 567
Before the Senate Health Committee
March 8, 2021

Chair Patterson, Vice-Chair Knopp, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of SB 567.

Members of the Oregon Trial Lawyers Association are lawyers who fight for underdogs – in this case, those are Oregonians who face discriminatory treatment by their health care provider.

As witnesses have testified, systemic discrimination in the delivery of health care is a crisis facing Oregonians. SB 567 is a step towards preventing discrimination and adding a deterrent to those who would otherwise not prioritize eliminating discriminatory practices.

SB 567 clarifies that discrimination in the delivery of health care falls under the purview of the Bureau of Labor and Industries' enforcement powers around discrimination in public accommodations. SB 567 should provide needed protection to Oregonians who receive disparate treatment from those not in a protected class. There have been a number of news reports regarding this issue in the midst of a pandemic that disproportionately affects the elderly, people with disabilities, and people of color. The language could be tightened even more in this area.

We also believe that SB 567 can put an end to disparate treatment based on stereotypes such as men with chest pains getting treated for heart attacks while women with chest pains getting treated for anxiety.

SB 567 also clarifies that these claims can be brought in state court (where fewer barriers exist for victims of discrimination) as well as federal court.

Finally, we are concerned that legislation under consideration that would grant immunity from liability for the medical industry from Covid-related harm may trump SB 567. We urge committee members to guard against this.

We urge a Do Pass recommendation on SB 567.