



February 4, 2021

Dear Chair Prusak, Vice-Chairs Salinas & Hayden, and members of the House Committee on Health Care:

I am writing on behalf of Cascade AIDS Project and Prism Health to express our strong support for House Bill 2508, which would make permanent the long-overdue, commonsense changes to Oregon's telehealth laws made in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

CAP and the people we serve have benefited tremendously from these changes. They enabled Prism Health, our LGBTQ+ primary-care and behavioral-health center, to transition to providing services virtually following the novel-coronavirus outbreak, without significant disruptions to our patients' care or the clinic's financial stability. This is important because, as the only nonprofit LGBTQ+ health center providing comprehensive primary care in the Pacific Northwest, Prism serves many patients who face barriers to accessing care elsewhere. More than 90% of the clinic's 1,500-plus patients identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, or another sexual or gender minority—all groups that experience lack of access to, and discrimination in, healthcare. Parity between in-person care and telemedicine has made it possible for our patients to keep receiving primary care and psychotherapy from a culturally specific institution that has earned their trust.

Once the pandemic is over, telehealth parity will continue to be beneficial in minimizing barriers to care for LGBTQ+ people—particularly those living in rural areas. Prism already serves some patients who live in rural areas lacking healthcare that is safe, welcoming, and knowledgeable for LGBTQ+ people. With the operational infrastructure for telemedicine now in place, we are excited to expand our outreach to more LGBTQ+ rural residents. However, this initiative depends on payment parity for telehealth—and specifically payment parity for audio-only services, since rural residents commonly do not have the high-quality internet connection needed for videochatting.

I hope that sharing the successes of, and potential for, telemedicine at Prism Health has impressed upon you the importance of telehealth parity, and I hope you will support this critical legislation to make parity permanent.

Sincerely,

Jonathan Frochtzwaig
Public Policy & Grants Manager

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