

Oregon State Legislature  
Ways and Means Human Services Subcommittee  
900 State Street NE  
Room H-178  
Salem, Oregon 97301

Representative Duane Stark  
900 Court Street NE  
Room H-372  
Salem, Oregon 97301  
E-mail: [repduanestark@oregonlegislature.gov](mailto:repduanestark@oregonlegislature.gov)

VIA E-MAIL AND ELECTRONIC SUBMISSION

**Re: Request for Support of HB 5019**

Representative Stark and Esteemed Committee Members:

We are writing to voice our support for funding bill HB 5019 and, more specifically, for the proposal recommended by Governor Brown to add six additional staff members to the Oregon Public Guardian and Conservator (OPGC) program. As Representative Stark knows well, Asante provides vital health care services to Medford, Ashland, Grants Pass, and other Southern Oregon communities. Asante's resources have been stretched thin by the covid pandemic, the wildfires of September 2020, and other recent challenges. Thus, the timing has never been better for the legislature to act in support of health systems and other organizations that help some of the region's most vulnerable individuals--patients who require the support and assistance of a guardian or conservator.

Guardians and conservators help not only the individuals for whom they are appointed; they also help health systems like Asante to use the community's and state's health care resources more efficiently and effectively. Asante estimates that it costs about \$1,700 per day to keep a patient in an acute care setting. Patients who cannot be discharged or moved to a lower level of care because they are unable to care for themselves, or to consent to a discharge or transfer, are often kept in the acute care setting for weeks or months longer than their health conditions would warrant. Guardians help shorten these unnecessary hospital stays, signing discharge and transfer paperwork and offering other assistance that allows patients to receive care and recover in more appropriately-tailored and less-expensive settings. The health benefits for patients are dramatic. The cost savings for health systems and state--especially the Oregon Health Plan--are substantial. In fact, a savings of almost a half million dollars could have been realized this past year had Asante been able to secure guardians for just three patients, each of whom spent about 90 extra days in the acute care setting.

The problem, of course, is that the OPGC program is not adequately staffed or financed to meet the state's current needs. Your support of HB 5019 will help address these deficiencies. Asante is confident that the state's investment in the OPGC program will more than pay for itself. The new staff members added to the OPGC program will enable more vulnerable patients to receive the care and support they need, in the settings that are most appropriate for their particular conditions. We therefore strongly encourage you to support the proposed expansion of the OPGC program.

Sincerely,



Courtney Wilson, MD  
Vice President of Medical Affairs  
Emergency Physician  
Asante Rogue Regional Medical Center