

March 22, 2021

Oregon State Legislature
Senate Committee on Health Care
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

Re: Senate Bill 629 – Telepharmacy Services

Chair Patterson and members of the Senate Committee on Health Care:

On behalf of Oregon’s 62 community hospitals and the patients they serve, the Oregon Association of Hospitals and Health Systems (OAHHS) supports Senate Bill 629. This bill will provide increased access and improved care for patients in rural Oregon by permitting the practice of telepharmacy.

Telepharmacy is a proven method for increasing access to health care providers and prescription medication with 25 states currently permitting the practice, including all our neighboring states. Moreover, except for Oklahoma and Arkansas, Oregon is the only state west of the Mississippi River that does not allow telepharmacy. With the vast majority of Oregon geographically classified as “rural” or “frontier”, this legislation stands to have a significant impact in the state.

For remote communities without pharmacy services, by increasing access through telepharmacy, we believe this legislation can lead to better health outcomes through improved medication compliance and patient engagement and fewer emergency room visits or hospital readmissions. Innovative practices like this stand to lower the cost of care for Oregonians and ultimately advance the quality of care. By increasing access to medications and counseling, while also decreasing the driving distance and wait times, telepharmacy has been shown to substantially improve patients’ retail pharmacy experience.^{1,2}

In the Oregon Health Care Workforce report released by the Oregon Health Authority in February 2021³, pharmacist FTE decreased by an average of 2.3% annually from 2016 to 2020 – one of only six health professions to decrease during this time. Meanwhile certified pharmacy technician FTE increased by almost 1.8% annually. This report also concludes that rural and other underserved areas can have difficulty retaining pharmacists, and this was the reason the loan repayment program was expanded to include PharmD clinicians in early 2018.

OAHHS supports SB 629, which will permit a proven practice to increase health care to rural Oregonians.

Thank you,



Katie Harris
Director of Rural Health & Federal Policy
Oregon Association of Hospitals and Health Systems

¹ Sarkar, R., Metzger, B., Sayre, H., Slater, C., Katamneni, S., Coustasse, A., & Drph. (2018). Telepharmacy and Access to Pharmaceutical Services in Rural Areas Telepharmacy and Access to Pharmaceutical Services in Rural Areas. Journal of AHIMA / American Health Information Management Association.

² Brown, W., Scott, D., Friesner, D., & Schmitz, T. (2017). Impact of telepharmacy services as a way to increase access to asthma care. Journal of Asthma, 54(9), 961–967. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02770903.2017.1281292>

³ <https://www.oregon.gov/oha/HPA/HP-HCW/Documents/2021-Health-Care-Workforce-Needs-Assessment.pdf>