



Testimony in Support of House Bill 2508 A
April 25, 2021
Senate Committee on Health Care
Deborah Riddick, JD RN

Good afternoon Chair Patterson, Vice Chair Knopp, and members of the committee. My name is Deborah Riddick. I am the Director of Government Relations for the Oregon Nurses Association (ONA). We represent 15,000 registered nurses throughout the state and the Nurse Practitioners of Oregon. The ONA supports HB 2508 A, which would require the Oregon Health Authority to ensure reimbursement of health services delivered using telemedicine.

Oregon has an impressive legacy of advancing health care innovation and system transformation. We are recognized nation-wide and direct efforts in states near and far; the nation continues to monitor our progress. For years there has been much consideration, but a lack of appetite, to pursue more broad usage of the technology that connects patients to the services and providers they need. This is disproportionately true for many marginalized BIPOC, low income, geographically isolated communities. The needs of our aging residents and those experiencing mobility issues or social stigmatization all became more urgent in March of 2020. HB 2508 A proposes to codify the temporary gains to health care access realized during our current pandemic.

Because of COVID, an accelerated adoption of telehealth became necessary. The pandemic's safe-distancing requirement benefitted from Oregon's long-standing history of allowing providers to practice at the top of their scope. This confluence of factors enabled our state to quickly command an all-hands, all-modality approach to distanced care delivery. Our increased usage deepened our understanding of the benefits of telehealth as a permanent care extender; it's also dispelled many concerns. HB 2508 A's reimbursement parity acknowledges the comparable value of the services provided, while supporting the patient's choice for telehealth services. Timely, care intervention is the most cost-effective alternative to poor outcomes resulting from access limitations which is central to the bill's provisions.

In addition, many patients prefer the convenience and familiarity of telehealth. Many working families, who cannot afford to spend the amount of time waiting in a health care facility, are able to quickly log onto a scheduled visit within minutes, preventing workflow disruption. Many Oregonians who have mobility limitations, including our seniors and those experiencing variations of abilities, have access to providers wherever they are. And for the generations of Oregonians, who have grown up with technology, telehealth is a familiar and well-known modality that resonates with their lifestyle and cultural norm. HB 2508 A could expand our ability to improve preventive and urgent care access.

The ONA supports HB 2508 A as another tool to support our focus on patient-responsive, provider-forward care management. We commend the bill's sponsor Chair Prusak for her leadership on the issue and for her commitment to providing evidence-based care options to as many Oregonians as possible. We believe that real-world solutions that emanate from those closest to the problem offer the best opportunity for success. We urge your support of HB 2508 A.