



Testimony from the Oregon Independent Medical Clinics in Support of HB 2508, Telehealth Pay Parity

April 26, 2021

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

The Oregon Independent Medical Clinics would like to express our enthusiastic support for HB 2508 and the permanent establishment of pay parity for telemedicine services. We are a coalition of 12 independent medical clinics serving rural and urban Oregon, with 5,300 health care workers, including 1,300 physicians. We provide critical healthcare to nearly 1 million Oregonians at more than 2.2 million patient visits each year.

One critical factor in our ability to care for patients during the pandemic, and going forward, is telehealth, which includes both telephone and video visits. Providing telehealth has required investments in new infrastructure and training. Not only is telehealth allowing patients to stay safe at home, but patients also appreciate this new convenient option to receive some of their care. In the post-pandemic era, we believe many patients will want to continue utilizing the convenience of telehealth.

Thankfully, emergency payment policies enacted by DCBS and a voluntary agreement by payors to observe pay parity during the emergency have allowed telehealth appointments to be paid at the same rate as in-clinic visits. However, as we look beyond the state of emergency and the pandemic, if no policy is changed, or no directive given, we expect that payors will resume their normal telehealth payment policy of 50% to 66% of an in-clinic visit. We care for thousands of patients from rural areas and underserved ethnic populations who would be well served by the continuation of telehealth parity. Telehealth visits are time effective and convenient for all patients, especially from these vulnerable populations.

Telehealth also dovetails with conservation and reduction of carbon emissions by reducing the relatively long drive times required of rural health patients. As we continue to modernize our health care system to adapt to the diverse needs of patients while ensuring equitable access to health care options, telehealth must be a key component of that system. For telehealth to be a viable, sustainable option for patients and their providers, we need pay parity to be a permanent assurance.

Washington and Colorado States have already enacted Telehealth Payment Parity legislation. Our coalition is asking Oregon to do the same and we urge your support for HB 2508.

Sincerely,

- Alison Andre, CEO, Compass Oncology
- John Burles, CEO, North Bend Medical Center
- Candace Chapman, CEO, Broadway Medical Clinic
- Dick Clark, CEO, The Portland Clinic
- Cynthia Jacobs, CEO, ORM Fertility
- Brian Kelly, CEO, Women's Healthcare Associates
- James Kaech, CEO, The Corvallis Clinic
- Ursula Luckert, CEO, Oregon Anesthesiology Group
- Tom Sanchez, CEO, The Oregon Clinic
- Michael Whitbeck, CEO, NW Primary Care Group
- Jeff Stewart, CEO, East Cascade Women's Group
- Brett Williams, CEO, Eye Health Northwest

