

January 31, 2022

The Honourable James Manning, Jr.  
Chair, Senate Committee on Veterans and Emergency Preparedness

Delivered electronically to: [sen.jamesmanning@oregonlegislature.gov](mailto:sen.jamesmanning@oregonlegislature.gov)

Chair Manning and members of the Committee:

Salem Health supports SB 1542, which would provide a state income tax exemption to Oregon National Guard members on active state duty. Members of the Oregon National Guard have again shown their value and attitude of service to the state during the COVID-19 pandemic. SB 1542 is a tangible gesture of gratitude from a thankful state.

As you know the COVID-19 pandemic has put unprecedented strain on Oregon hospitals. West Valley Hospital in Dallas is a critical access hospital serving greater Polk County. Salem Hospital has the busiest Emergency Department on the West Coast and is a Level 2 Trauma Center serving the greater mid-Willamette Valley. From the start of the pandemic, Salem Health has served some of the state's communities hit hardest by COVID. Together, we have served thousands of COVID-19 inpatients and hundreds of thousands through our primary care clinics, testing locations and vaccination clinics. The pandemic has asked Salem Health to do things we have never done, from caring for patients far beyond our normal bed capacity to building mass vaccine efforts.

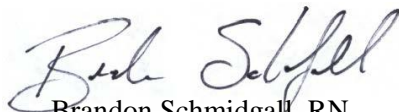
The National Guard has been an important partner at several critical junctures of the pandemic. Salem Health collaborated with the guard to expand capacity at the state's first mass vaccination center at the Oregon State Fair Grounds. Working together, we vaccinated tens of thousands of Oregonians, saving untold lives. During the peaks of the Delta surge, and now the Omicron surge, Oregon Guard members have worked side-by-side with Salem Health staff at both West Valley Hospital and Salem Hospital. We are thankful for their can-do attitude and how they seamlessly fit into the complex systems of both hospitals.

However, we know that many Guard members experience a financial burden when on active duty. When their non-Guard jobs pay more than military pay, Guard members and their families may struggle to make ends meet during deployments like the one happening right now. For this reason and others, we urge you to schedule a work session and pass this SB 142 to the floor.

Sincerely,



Cheryl Nester Wolfe, RN  
President & CEO  
Salem Health



Brandon Schmidgall, RN  
Chief Administrative Officer,  
West Valley Hospital