

**Providence Health & Services**

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March 7, 2023

Honorable Chairs Campos and Valderrama  
Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Human Services  
900 Court St. NE, Salem, OR 97301

RE: SB 5520 – Support Oregon’s Public Guardian Program

Chairs Campos and Valderrama and members of the Committee:

Providence Health and Services is a Mission driven organization and the largest private employer and health system in Oregon with eight hospitals, dozens of clinics, a medical group and an insurance plan. We are writing today to urge your support for SB 5520, the budget for Oregon’s Long Term Care Ombudsman and Public Guardian programs.

**Public Guardians play a significant role in addressing a serious problem facing hospitals across Oregon – long length of stay.**

Coming out of the COVID pandemic, Oregon hospitals are facing serious capacity issues from several compounding factors. Patients who delayed care during COVID are coming to hospitals with more complex needs, and they require longer lengths of stay. The lack of community placement leaves patients who don’t meet inpatient criteria in the hospital, long after they are ready for discharge to an appropriate lower-level-of-care facility. Today Providence Oregon hospitals have more than 75 patients who are unable to discharge while they wait for a place in the community.

Providence has long been an advocate for investments in Oregon’s Public Guardian program, which serves a vital purpose as one of the tools available to ensure that individuals are being served at the most appropriate level of care. Unfortunately, and too often, Providence hospitals are serving patients suffering from dementia or a related symptom who are unable to make important decisions around care or placement. Some of these individuals are in an acute care hospital setting for weeks or months longer than necessary. Sadly, too many of these patients have no friend or family member able to support them in this time of need. In those circumstances, Oregon’s Public Guardian program is available to help.

Providence would ask for your support of SB 5520 to keep Oregon’s Public Guardian program supported in the coming biennium.

Kristen Downey  
Executive Director, State Government Affairs  
Providence Health & Services, Oregon