

Support for Oregon Guardianship Program in SB 1507

Chair Patterson, Vice Chair Hayden and Members of the Senate Health Care Committee,

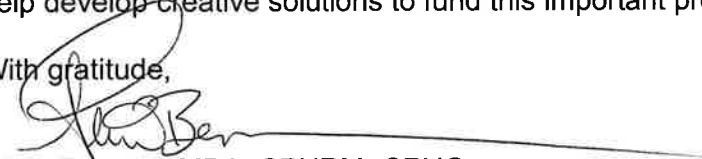
I am writing to express PeaceHealth's support for the -1 amendment to SB 1507, which expands the caseload capacity of the Oregon Public Guardian program within the Office of the Long Term Care Ombudsman. PeaceHealth also wants to express how vital the program is for Oregonians struggling to navigate the health care system while seeking care for severe behavioral health issues.

PeaceHealth Sacred Heart Medical Center at RiverBend, PeaceHealth Cottage Grove Community Medical Center, and PeaceHealth Peace Harbor Medical Center are critical points of access for health care services in Lane County. We provide comprehensive and compassionate medical services to patients from a broad geographical area, including those who need advanced care, like trauma, neonatal intensive care, neurosurgery, comprehensive cardiovascular and more. Behavioral health needs are constantly underfunded in Lane County, specifically including guardianship services.

PeaceHealth relies heavily upon guardians to assist patients who have significant behavioral health needs as they transition through the behavioral health and broader medical care systems. When guardianship services are not readily available, patients often are boarded in emergency rooms or in other care settings that are not designed to meet the specific healing needs of this particular patient population. Our behavioral health unit in Eugene (operating under the license of PeaceHealth Sacred Heart Medical Center at RiverBend) has 35 beds that are currently at capacity, which means patients have been boarding in our emergency department, which is a particularly inappropriate care setting for these patients. We need to find ways to dedicate more funding to guardianship and other community resources needed to ensure patients can receive the right care, at the right time, and in the right setting, so that they can progress in their recovery.

Guardianship is a necessary and important process. Without a strong program, patients suffer and are denied timely access to proper levels of needed health care services. PeaceHealth supports the additional five FTE within SB 1507 with the -1 amendment to reinforce the community health system. The guardianship program directly impacts the most vulnerable patients in Oregon, and we implore you to not only protect, but bolster this program to ensure future needs are met. We are available and willing to continue this conversation with you and help develop creative solutions to fund this important program.

With gratitude,



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PeaceHealth Sacred Heart Medical Center at RiverBend