



Chair Nosse, Vice Chairs Goodwin and Nelson, and members of the House Committee on Behavioral Health & Health Care.

On August 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2023, Eugene area residents were notified of the impending closure of University District hospital. As the community grappled with the realization this important resource would no longer be available, Representative Nathanson convened community leaders to discuss how to protect access to healthcare in our community. Through these meetings, all agreed that gaps in the healthcare system were likely, especially given that local EDs were already frequently overwhelmed and had long wait times. And yet, hospitals were identifying numerous utilizers of the emergency department who did not require a hospital level of care but, due to their insurance, lack of access to primary care, or unmet social needs, were ending up in the ED.

Alongside Representative Nathanson, community leaders pointed out that our local challenges were happening in communities across Oregon, as healthcare systems struggle all over the state. The strategy turned from a hyperlocal discussion to one with solutions that could positively impact other communities as well. In particular, two pieces of this bill have the potential for broad impact.

1. Provisional nurse licensure. Hospitals across Oregon are suffering deeply from a nurse staffing crisis. This bill would permit provisional licensure for nurses from out of state, thereby helping to reduce recruitment challenges.
2. An innovation fund. We recognize that there continues to be unnecessary ED utilization in our community, and communities across the state – especially amongst un- and underinsured individuals who have few other healthcare options. The innovation fund in this bill will allow our community to pilot programs to reduce unnecessary ED, 911, and ambulance utilization by providing alternative and less costly options for healthcare access and to share those lessons learned via OHA with the rest of Oregon.

Oregon has long been committed to achieving the triple aim of improving quality and satisfaction in healthcare while decreasing overall costs. Through this bill, we address the immediate term needs to stabilize local emergency healthcare in Lane County, given that we have one less hospital. We also see an opportunity to vision a future where healthcare relies less on emergency response and is better equipped to provide the right healthcare, in the right setting, and at the right time. Thank you for your support of this bill.

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