

Submitter: Dawn Wipf  
On Behalf Of:  
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Measure: SB1507

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Written Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 1507

My name is Dawn Wipf, Director of Resource Management at Asante and I am writing in support of Senate Bill 1507 for additional funding for the Oregon Public Guardianship (OPG) Program.

Asante is a nonprofit public benefit corporation headquartered in Medford, Oregon, that operates hospitals, healthcare clinics, and laboratories throughout southwestern Oregon. Our payor mix at Asante is 75% Medicare and Medicaid patients.

Southern Oregon has a large population of retirees and low-income people. Over the last 5 years the number of unhoused individuals has also risen. In my experience, we are seeing more and more Medicare and Medicaid patients who do not have the support of any family or friends.

In 2020, Asante began tracking data for delays in discharge from the hospital. One finding has been that hospital discharge delays often occur when the patient lacks capacity to make decisions for themselves, needs placement in a long-term care setting, but lacks the support of friends, family, or a guardian to assist in that decision. These individuals would benefit greatly from additional support of the OPG Program. When a patient lacks capacity and someone to speak on their behalf, the hospital is unable to even start the Medicaid process until a guardian is in place. In 2020, the OPG program was out months and had several clients on the wait list. This created capacity constraints in the hospital. Patients who did not require acute care and were ready for placement in a long-term care setting, could not be discharged because they lacked a guardian. These patients at times were stuck in the hospital for months while we attempted to find a private guardian to assist. Additionally, Asante often would pay for this private guardianship service in order to help the patient get to the right level of care.

In 2021, Asante averaged between 6 - 11 patients who needed a guardian and were waiting for discharge to a memory care setting. In 2022, the average increased to 15 - 20 patients. Of those patients, a third needed support from the OPG Program. On average, the number of days in the hospital was 92 days.

For these reasons, I would like to urge our legislators to support this bill to serve the patients in our communities and free up hospital beds for those having urgent or critical needs.

Thank you,  
Dawn Wipf