

Submitter: Christopher Altenhofen
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Health Care
Measure: HB4130

I am Chris Altenhofen, a practicing radiologist in the Portland area for nearly 30 years. I am currently the president of EPIC Imaging, PC, and we operate 5 outpatient imaging centers in the Portland area for nearly 60 years. Prior to president, I was medical director for 13 years. As outpatient clinics, we are the low cost provider of high-end imaging services in Portland offering top notch imaging services with unequaled service and convenience to our patients and referring providers. While patients may have to wait weeks to have their imaging done in a hospital, we can accommodate patients within 1-2 days or same day for truly urgent imaging if needed. We are a small practice, relatively, with only 12 radiologists, who are solely employed by our PC.

On Monday, February 26th, I attended the public hearing on HB 4130 at the Capitol but unfortunately was not able to testify publicly as time ran out while a written response from Bud Pierce was read instead. My practice is opposed to HB 4130 as it is currently written. We consider it a clumsy attempt - a blunt instrument if you will - cutting a much wider swath than needed, and we see it as a real threat to our survival as a small but important independent outpatient radiology practice.

As a full service radiology practice, we are continually needing to upgrade and maintain our high-end imaging equipment, including multiple multimillion dollar MR and CT scanners. For this, we need access to capital, and we achieve this through our partnership with RAYUS Radiology, a national Maintenance Services Organization, an MSO. We co-own our imaging centers with RAYUS within a separate LLC. The LLC has a board consisting of four directors, and EPIC Imaging has two seats on the board and we enjoy a veto position over any board decisions despite owning just 20% of the LLC.

I listened to former governor Kitzhaber's testimony and I could only shake my head. His wholesale besmirching of any and all physicians working with corporate partners was uncalled for and entirely gratuitous. Frankly, his viewpoint is simply wrong and misguided and should not be universally applied to every practice. I sit on the board of our LLC with the MSO. As a board member representing our PC's 20% interest in the LLC, I remain a dedicated physician with the same oath to my patients and a total commitment to their care, just as I did when our PC owned 100% of the practice, an even larger financial interest. We are not puppets for corporate interests, as Dr. Kitzhaber brazenly stated. Our seats and votes on this board are vitally important to bring our physician voice and perspective as the actual frontline healthcare providers to the board. It makes no sense to remove our voices and votes from the LLC board.

We consider that the exact opposite outcome of the stated intent of this overly broad bill. It would be harmful to patient care and an existential threat to our practice survival.

While we agree with the initial premise of this bill to address abuses of corporate directed medicine, let's not "throw out the baby with the bathwater." These partnerships and board representation are vitally important to many small practices who are vying to survive independently and not get swallowed up into the equally corporate, more bureaucratic, and much more expensive hospital systems. Please consider adding language that would allow small practices such as ours to form and participate in partnerships we need to continue to deliver much needed and important healthcare services at lower costs to our hundreds of thousands of patients.