

Submitter: Douglas Walker

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Behavioral Health and Health Care

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2204

Representative Rob Nosse (Chair) and members of the House Committee on Behavioral Health and Health Care,

I am an optometric physician practicing in Brookings, Oregon (Curry County) and I am reaching out to ask for your support in the passage of HB 2204. The bill removes the requirement that optometric physicians have hospital consulting privileges in order to qualify for a rural tax credit. I have practiced in rural Curry County for the past 25 years and I have had hospital privileges at Curry County General Hospital during that entire time.

It has been difficult to attract new physicians to our area and we are facing losing critical services in our community. To compete with more populated areas in acquiring physicians, rural communities rely upon financial incentives such as tax credits and student loan forgiveness.

To function as intended, tax credits must be easily accessible. The requirement to have a hospital affiliation is an unnecessary barrier to many optometric physicians in rural communities. The credentialing process is arduous. It can take months or even years for small rural hospitals to establish criteria for new providers, and they often have little or no motivation to do so.

I am asking for your support in expanding access to rural healthcare and HB 2204 is a positive step forward. Thank you for your support.

Respectfully,
Douglas Walker, OD