

Submitter: Leslie Elms
On Behalf Of: HB2204
Committee: House Committee On Behavioral Health and Health
Care
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2204

I am an optometric physician practicing in Eastern Oregon. 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 Baker City, Oregon for over 25 years. I have had hospital privileges for the majority of that time. Obtaining those privileges was a very laborious process and was an unnecessary barrier, as the majority of patients referred to us by the hospital are seen in our clinic where we have the on-site equipment necessary to diagnose and treat them.

For the last five years we have had only three optometric physicians to cover our entire county. For routine care appointments we are booked out over a year. We have experienced significant challenges recruiting new physicians to rural Oregon. 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.

I am asking for your support in removing the outdated and unnecessary barrier of having to be affiliated with a hospital in order to be eligible for a tax credit. HB 2204 is a positive step forward. Thank you for your support!

Respectfully,
Leslie Elms, OD