

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

I am an optometric physician practicing in Oregon 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.

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.

In Eastern Oregon we are limited in our recruiting potential and need every bit of assistance we can get to keep care available for these small rural communities. Tax credits and loan forgiveness provide additional motivation for new providers to seek out practices in our area. We are also very limited on Ophthalmology in Eastern Oregon so we manage the majority of medically based eyecare for our hospital systems out of our own practices. The requirement for hospital privileges is unnecessary as our equipment and expertise supersede anything available at these small local hospitals and referrals are instead made to our practices on a regular basis rather than us consulting on site at the hospital. It is my hope that you will consider this bill so we can take a positive step toward care availability in these small rural communities.

Thank you for your time and consideration!

Best regards,
Derek Blankenship, OD