



## Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 296

February 11, 2025

### Chair Patterson, Vice Chair Hayden and Members of the Committee:

My name is Matt Swanson, and I am here today as a representative of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Oregon State Council. We represent more than 85,000 workers across Oregon including frontline healthcare workers in hospitals, long term care and home and community-based settings. Our members—nurses, social workers, case managers, and direct care staff—see firsthand how Oregon’s system is failing patients and workers alike due to unnecessary delays to an appropriate care setting.

We worked side by side with members of the task force to address the systems and factors contributing to these delays in discharge. The recommendations of the task force represent an urgent call to action to ensure appropriate care and support for those dealing with long-term medical challenges. We urge your support for SB 296 to fix these systemic issues and ensure that both patients and healthcare workers have the resources they need.

At any time, hundreds of patients can be delayed from discharge due to a variety of factors. This backlog puts enormous strain on hospital staff, limiting available beds for new patients and increasing the workload on already overburdened healthcare workers. SB 296 takes important steps to address these issues by:

- Increasing the Oregon Health Plan post-hospital extended care benefit from 20 days to 100 days. Right now, many long-term care facilities struggle to accept patients due to financial constraints, forcing hospitals to hold patients who no longer need acute care. Expanding this benefit will allow more facilities to take in patients sooner, reducing hospital overcrowding.
- Raising base rates for adult foster homes. Our union members saw during the COVID-19 emergency that increased funding for adult foster homes helped expand capacity and improve discharge rates. These facilities are a critical part of our care continuum, and long-term investment is needed to ensure they can continue to serve vulnerable patients.
- Requiring DHS and OHA to track Medicaid LTSS eligibility processing times and recommend ways to streamline the system. Our healthcare system cannot afford to keep patients in limbo because of bureaucratic delays. Medicaid is the primary payer for long-term care, and it is essential that eligibility decisions are made quickly and efficiently to prevent unnecessary hospital backlogs. We also strongly encourage the agencies to work with a broad set of stakeholders, including eligibility workers, front line providers, consumers and advocates to ensure that the system improvements reflect broad input and accountability.

Oregon’s frontline healthcare workers are doing everything they can to provide quality care, but they need systemic changes to ensure that patients can transition out of hospitals when they no longer need acute care. SB 296 is a necessary step toward fixing

these issues, supporting both patients and healthcare workers. We urge you to pass SB 296 and invest in a healthcare system that works for everyone.

Thank you for your time and consideration.