



February 11, 2025

Senate Committee on Health Care

Sen. Deb Patterson, Chair

Sen. Cedric Hayden, Vice Chair

Chair Patterson, Vice Chair Hayden and members of the committee,

As the chief operations officer for OHSU Health, I see firsthand every day the challenges OHSU Hospital and our health system partners have in discharging patients to appropriate care settings. The persistent issue impacts our patients and limits our ability to provide care to those who need it.

Over the last year, as a member of the Task Force on Hospital Discharge Challenges, I was pleased at the opportunity to join stakeholders from across the state, representing interests across the care continuum in developing recommendations to address the issue of hospital discharge. On behalf of OHSU, I offer our full support for the consensus recommendations of the task force. The recommendations represent concrete steps we can take as a state to begin improving access to care and investing in a better model.

OHSU is Oregon's only public academic health center, and our hospital provides some of the most complex care. Since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, capacity at OHSU has been severely strained, meaning patients in need of everything from cancer care to complex surgeries are having to wait longer.

Due to delays in approval and limited capacity, OHSU has invested precious institutional resources to support patients and find appropriate care settings to create access within our hospital. In one recent example, we had a patient with a

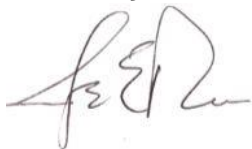
brain mass in the hospital. After 21 days, with the patient medically stable, we made a decision to place this patient in an adult foster home with OHSU temporarily funding the home. This patient is still waiting for Long Term Care Medicaid approval for his long-term placement and care at the adult foster home. Without our temporary bed payment program, this patient would still be in the hospital, at 238 days, medically ready for discharge at around 21 days. Since we made the decision to temporarily pay for an adult foster home, approximately 31 additional people were able to access OHSU for acute care.

As of Friday, OHSU had 85 people in our post-acute care programs awaiting long-term care Medicaid approval – 54 in skilled nursing, 16 in apartments (houseless individuals needing medical respite and assistance to find housing or a shelter bed), and 15 in temporary beds in adult foster homes and intermediate care facilities.

I want to thank the task force members, including Chair Patterson, for the extensive collaboration. The shared commitment to addressing these challenges for the people of Oregon leads us to where we are today, with a path forward in addressing our discharge challenges.

I urge your support for these recommendations and Senate Bill 296.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joe Ness', written in a cursive style.

Joe Ness, M.H.A., B.S.Pharm.
Senior Vice President, Chief Operations Officer
OHSU Health