

Submitter: Luke Hinson
On Behalf Of: OHSU Audiology
Committee: House Committee On Behavioral Health and Health Care
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2357

As an audiologist, I strongly support Oregon HB 2357 because it is essential for improving access to quality hearing healthcare, particularly for individuals in rural and underserved areas. Hearing loss is a significant public health concern that impacts communication, cognitive health, and overall well-being. Unfortunately, many Oregonians and Washingtonians - especially those in rural areas, struggle to access necessary audiology services due to geographic barriers and provider shortages.

This bill is critical in addressing these disparities by:

1. Expanding access to care: Rural residents often travel long distances for healthcare, leading to delays in diagnosis and treatment of hearing loss. HB 2357 helps ensure that individuals in all parts of Oregon and Washington can access more audiology services in a timely manner.
2. Enhancing hearing device support through telehealth: Many individuals with cochlear implants and/or hearing aids require ongoing programming and adjustments to optimize their hearing. Remote care and telehealth services allow audiologists to provide real-time programming, troubleshooting, and support without requiring patients to travel long distances. HB 2357 recognizes the importance of these services and helps ensure that individuals with cochlear implants receive the care they need, regardless of location.
3. Reducing health disparities: Untreated hearing loss is linked to increased risks of social isolation, depression, and cognitive decline. By improving access to care, particularly in rural areas, we can promote better long-term health outcomes.

By passing HB 2357, Oregon can take an important step toward addressing healthcare inequities and ensuring that rural communities have access to essential hearing healthcare services, including hearing device remote programming. I urge lawmakers to support this bill for the well-being of all Oregonians - and in part Washingtonians.

Thanks for your time.

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