

Submitter: Alisha Saultz

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Finance and Revenue

Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB125

Good afternoon Chair Meek, Vice-Chair McLane and members of the committee. For the record, my name is Dr. Alisha Saultz and I am a Family Medicine physician with Northwest Primary Care. Our practice is located in Multnomah and Clackamas Counties.

I am also here on behalf of the Oregon Independent Medical Coalition representing physician owned clinics and 1,600 providers in communities across the state. The coalition advocates for reasonable regulations and public policy for these health clinics to remain independent and serve tens of thousands of Oregonians with quality, affordable and accessible care.

I am here to register our support for SB 125 which would increase access to health care by exempting receipts from Medicaid, Medicare and other public assistance programs from the Commercial Activities Tax.

I am one of the 14 business owners of our physician led group. We employ 27 Physicians, Nurse Practitioners and Physician Associates as well as approximately 200 employees. We serve around 32,000 patients, 30% of which are Medicare, Medicaid. As a Family Medicine doctor, I like to say we serve our community in birth to death- often caring for multiple generations of the same family. I have delivered over 300 babies since joining our group, much to the delight of many of my patients, who happen to also be their parents, grandparents & great grandparents. I have near 1500 patients that call me their primary care physician, many I've been taking care of more than a decade now.

Thank you for drafting this legislation. We have found on our small business end, that unlike other businesses that can pass their costs onto their consumers, we are not able to do that due to fixed process of reimbursement that are set by insurance companies. In addition, when we see patients that are Medicare and Medicaid, their reimbursement rates are well below what it costs to care for these patients. Because of this we operate at a deficit to see these patients. This has resulted in putting the smaller independent health care clinics, such as ours, at financial risk by caring for these patients. This risk continues to worsen with time as we have seen the business expenses & costs of taking care of patients rise combined with decreased reimbursement by insurances. I want to make sure that those of us who are seeing these patients are able to continue doing so, and passing this bill helps us continue providing continuity of care for these patients.

I am here today because it is important to me that our business be fiscally solvent and be able to pay our employees- the nurses, social workers, FNP and PAs that I work with every day to continue to take care of our population when healthcare has been the most challenging time of my career. The American Academy of Family Physicians shows that doctors who work at independent clinics are statistically less

likely to experience burn out and better retention. It is important that we support independent clinics during this time as it supports more healthcare providers staying in the field and quality health care at reduced costs for the state.

I commend and agree with the goals to support education. However, the revenue the CAT tax brings from independent clinics is disproportional with the financial impact it has on these healthcare clinics. The CAT tax has the unintended side effect of putting even more jeopardy on our ability to keep our doors open and serve our patients. This bill results in clinics such as ours being taxed multiple times for caring for underserved and underinsured populations. We simply ask for an exemption for the above public assistance plans so that we don't operate further in the negative by taking care of our most vulnerable patients. We are passionate about our calling in medicine and our ability to take care of people, despite their insurance. Passing this bill allows us to continue doing so.