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On Behalf Of:  
Committee: Senate Committee On Health Care  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB951

I am a 75 year old retired occupational therapist. I strongly believe that, in the course of my career, the quality of health care has seriously declined in our state. In large part, this is because of what people call the "corporate practice of medicine." An example you may know about: in Eugene in 2020, Optum (a subsidiary of UnitedHealth Group ) purchased Oregon Medical Group, a 30 plus year old multi-clinic practice, which was established and owned by physicians. By mid-2024, 30% of the physicians had left the practice. This resulted in several thousand people- mostly seniors on Medicare, some of my friends- receiving letters that the practice could not provide a primary care provider for them.

I spoke with one of those physicians, who departed and was able to open an individual practice. He told me that the doctors were expected to maintain patient list of over 2,000. They were forced to enter charges in the billing system instead of by clerical billing staff. They were pressured to include multiple diagnoses from the patient's history, in addition to the reason for the visit. They were pressured to see more patients each day for fewer minutes. He said he left due to this "moral injury." He was more fortunate than some other physicians who left OMG; they were forced to leave our area due to "non-compete" clauses in their Optum contracts.

This happened despite Oregon's long-standing Corporate Practice Of Medicine law. Optum-owned and private equity "management services organizations" have developed loopholes to this important law. Friends in Portland and Corvallis have suffered similar decreased quality of care when Optum purchased their clinics.

A New England Journal of Medicine article stated, "Emerging empirical evidence suggests three primary risks that corporatized medicine poses: increased health care prices and spending owing to market consolidation and exploitation of payment loopholes, patient care concerns associated with changes in practice patterns and pressures to reduce staffing, and moral injury and burnout among physicians. The preponderance of evidence hasn't yet suggested commensurate improvements in quality, access, efficiency, or equity to offset these concerns." Another study in the New England Journal of Medicine showed that when a private equity company buys a clinic, costs rise by as much as 20%; patient time spent with the provider decreases; unnecessary procedures go up; and the risk of complications rise.

Please prevent more decline in the availability and quality of health care in Oregon by strengthening the provisions in Oregon's Corporate Practice of Medicine law, as written in SB 951.