

Submitter: Gwendolyn O'Keefe
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Health Care
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB951

Distinguished Legislators,

My name is Gwendolyn O'Keefe, MD and I am writing to express my strong support for Senate Bill 951, particularly its provisions addressing non-compete clauses for physicians. My personal experience in Corvallis, Oregon, starkly illustrates the urgent need for this legislative intervention.

When a large corporation acquired The Corvallis Clinic where I was a primary care physician, I made a conscious decision not to continue working under corporate medical management. However, the existing non-compete clause threatened my ability to continue serving my community independently. After consulting with legal counsel, I received sobering advice: challenging the non-compete would be prohibitively expensive, time-consuming, and – most critically – carry an uncertain chance of success.

Non-compete clauses fundamentally undermine healthcare by:

- Forcing physicians to choose between professional integrity and livelihood
- Disrupting patient care and established medical relationships
- Prioritizing corporate interests over individual patient needs

These clauses also create significant challenges for physicians by:

- Creating insurmountable legal and financial barriers
- Limiting professional autonomy and career choices
- Forcing medical professionals out of their local communities

The financial and legal barriers effectively prevented me from practicing medicine as I chose, forcing me to abandon my practice and my patients. My patient panel – primarily elderly, complex Medicare patients – was abruptly disrupted.

Senate Bill 951 addresses a critical issue in healthcare: the ability of physicians to practice medicine in their communities. By eliminating most non-compete clauses, this bill will:

- Level the playing field between physicians and corporate entities
- Protect physicians' right to practice in their chosen communities
- Ensure continued access to healthcare for vulnerable patient populations
- Prevent the arbitrary disruption of patient-physician relationships

My personal journey is not unique. Physicians across Oregon face similar challenges, where the threat of costly legal battles becomes a tool of professional suppression. Senate Bill 951 represents a critical safeguard against these predatory practices. I urge the Legislature to pass this bill and stand up for physicians' rights and patients' interests. This legislation is more than a policy change – it is a necessary protection

for healthcare professionals and the communities they serve.
Thank you for your consideration.
Sincerely, Gwendolyn O'Keefe, MD