

March 6, 2025

Oregon State Legislature  
Joint Committee on Ways and Means  
Subcommittee on Human Services  
900 Court Street NE  
Salem, OR 97301  
*Submitted electronically via OLIS*

**Re: HB 5020, relating to funding for the public guardian and conservator program and services provided to care facility residents**

Co-Chair Valderrama, Co-Chair Campos, and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of Oregon's 61 community hospitals, the Hospital Association of Oregon appreciates your commitment to supporting patients and addressing the challenges faced by hospitals in discharging patients with complex needs to post-acute care settings. The hospital association supports HB 5020, a bill that provides crucial funding to the Office of the Long-Term Ombudsman for general program and services provided to care facility residents and the public guardian and conservator program. HB 5020 will help patients move from hospital beds to post-acute settings that can better meet their care needs.

Hospitalized patients who lack decision-making capacity and do not have a family member or friend available to serve as a surrogate decision maker may need a public guardian to decide their post-acute care path. Some of our members' patients have experienced six- to eight-month delays in the hospital waiting for the appointment of a public guardian. Many such patients have complex care needs, and a hospital environment can be unsettling for them.

The Joint Task Force on Hospital Discharge Challenges was established specifically to address challenges in the discharge process and issued a final report on November 12, 2024. The task force recommended increasing support for legal guardians, in recognition that a contributing factor to discharge delays is a shortage of public guardians. The Oregon Public Guardian Conservator Program (OPG) reported to the task force that in 2023, 53% of then-current clients were hospitalized and unable



to be safely discharged at the time of referral to the OPG.<sup>1</sup> The report also estimated that 500 or more individuals in the community may have unmet needs for guardianship and many more may need less restrictive forms of supported decision making. The state has an obligation to care for extremely vulnerable people who lack another trusted individual to advocate for them and need public guardian services.

In 2024, the legislature created five limited duration positions in the OPG specifically allocated for challenging hospital discharge related cases. HB 5020 provides permanent funding for those positions.

The Oregon Public Guardian shared with us that in the first seven months of receiving the limited duration funding, they onboarded all five new staff members, created an intake team for more efficient assessment and petitioning for new cases, and educated hospitals and health systems on how to collaborate with the Office of Public Guardian. The Office of Public Guardian has been appointed as guardian for 20 individuals who were in hospitals, and through the Office of Public Guardian's enhanced screening and assessment processes, they were able to identify less restrictive alternatives or alternative guardians to assist another 30 individuals. In total, the Office of Public Guardian has helped 50 individuals safely discharge from hospitals. However, the funding for these positions expires on June 30, 2025. The hospital association supports permanently funding the five public guardian positions created in the Oregon Public Guardian.

The hospital association encourages you to support funding that HB 5020 provides for patients across the state who are waiting to be discharged from hospitals to more appropriate care settings.

Sincerely,



Troy Duker  
Director of Government Affairs  
Hospital Association of Oregon

#### **About the Hospital Association of Oregon**

Founded in 1934, the Hospital Association of Oregon Association (HAO) is a mission-driven, nonprofit trade association representing Oregon's 61 hospitals. Together, hospitals are the sixth largest private employer statewide, employing more than 70,000 employees. Committed to fostering a stronger, safer, more equitable Oregon where all people have access to the high-quality care they need, the hospital association supports Oregon's hospitals so they can support their communities; educates

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<sup>1</sup> Recommendations of the Joint Task Force on Hospital Discharge Challenges at 24 (Nov. 12, 2024), available at [Recommendations of the Joint Task Force on Hospital Discharge Challenges](#).



government officials and the public on the state's health landscape and works collaboratively with policymakers, community based organizations and the health care community to build consensus on and advance health care policy benefiting the state's 4 million residents.



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