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**STATE REPRESENTATIVE**  
HOUSE DISTRICT 44  
NORTH/NORTHEAST PORTLAND



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**  
**Testimony in Support in House Bill 2940-1**

Chair-Nosse, Vice-Chair Javadi and Members of the House Committee on Behavioral Health and Healthcare,

My name is Travis Nelson, State Representative for House District 44, North and Northeast Portland. This legislation is the continuation of work that began in 2023 with HB 2927, which proposed a steering committee to explore how Oregon can better treat sickle cell patients. That effort was rooted in ongoing collaboration with Pastor Marcia Taylor, founder of the Sickle Cell Anemia Foundation of Oregon. HB 2940-1 carries that vision forward. It originally aimed to establish a statewide emergency department protocol for treating sickle cell disease. But after extensive conversations with stakeholders, community members, and the Hospital Association, we refined the approach and developed the amendment that is ported to OLIS.

I want to begin by laying the groundwork for why this bill matters—because many people aren't familiar with sickle cell disease or how deeply it affects those who live with it. During a crisis, misshapen red blood cells block oxygen flow, triggering sudden, intense pain that can last for days. Patients often describe it as worse than broken bones or childbirth. Without proper care, these episodes can lead to trauma, organ damage, or even death.

And while yes, Oregon's sickle cell population is small, that's a big part of why we have a problem. Many emergency departments don't see enough cases to develop the experience or protocols needed to treat these patients effectively. That lack of familiarity can turn a painful crisis into a life-threatening one or worse, not believing the pain that patients are in or assuming they are just drug seeking. Can you imagine being in that kind of pain—unbearable, all-consuming—and still not being believed? Still waiting hours in the ER for relief?

HB 2940-1 can close this gap. It directs the Oregon Health Authority to implement a program that provides emergency departments with real-time notifications of a sickle cell patient's individual protocols. These alerts will be delivered through an existing electronic system already used by emergency departments. I believe the Hospital Association is here today and can speak more to that current database. Most importantly, this system can connect emergency providers to a hematologist in real time. This matters because many sickle cell patients have individualized care protocols, which are tailored treatments that may fall outside the norm but are what works best for them during a crisis. Having access to a specialist in real time can mean the difference between stabilizing a patient or prolonging their suffering. It ensures critical information isn't lost in the noise of a busy ER or dismissed by an unfamiliar provider. We don't just need systems that treat pain—we need systems that hear it, recognize it, and act.

HB 2940-1 also ensures this program is shaped by the people who know it best. A multidisciplinary workgroup will advise on implementation specifics. The OHA has confirmed they will need to update their software system, which will cost about \$50,000, making this a high-impact solution with fairly small fiscal. This bill has the power to ease suffering and save lives. With one small change, we can make sure these patients are seen, heard, and treated with the urgency their pain demands. I urge your support for HB 2940-1.

Thank you,

State Representative Travis Nelson  
House District 44, North/NE Portland