

April 22, 2025

Honorable Chair Patterson & Members of the Committee:

RE: Support of HB 2789

My name is Steffanie Altenbern, and I am a social worker serving the medically vulnerable population in the Portland area. I am writing this letter on behalf of Oregon Continental Home Health to highlight a critical gap in access to care for homebound patients.

Our team of social workers, case managers, and peer support specialists provide in-home services to individuals who are unable to access care through traditional means. We assist with care coordination, improving access to medical and mental health services, and supporting overall patient well-being.

Oregon Continental Home Health serves a patient population that is largely covered under the Oregon Health Plan/Medicaid. Our agencies collaborate closely to ensure that these patients receive the medical and mental health therapies they need. However, a significant barrier exists when patients are discharged from hospitals without an established primary care provider (PCP).

Over the past year, nearly 100 patients referred to Oregon Continental Home Health have been unable to receive necessary in-home care due to a lack of PCP involvement. While the agency's nurses are fully qualified to provide services such as wound care, diabetes education, and other essential nursing treatments, they are unable to admit patients or initiate care without signed physician orders. As a result, patients are often left to manage their conditions on their own, leading to preventable complications and emergency department visits.

Even when patients do have a PCP, delays in obtaining signed orders or long wait times for appointments can prevent the agency from delivering timely care. This puts medically fragile individuals at risk and places additional strain on an already overburdened healthcare system.

The proposed bill will improve access to medically necessary services for some of our most vulnerable community members. By enabling home health agencies to act more efficiently in these cases, the legislation has the potential to reduce unnecessary emergency room visits and overall healthcare costs.

Thank you for your support on HB 2789.

Kindly,

Steffanie Altenbern, CSWA  
Social Worker  
On behalf of Oregon Continental Home Health