



House Committee on Health Care
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

February 5, 2019

Re: Support for HB 2624 Emergency Department Boarding Funding and Task Force

Dear Chair Greenlick and members of the House Committee on Health Care,

Thank you for the opportunity to voice our support for House Bill 2624, which establishes Emergency Department Boarding Pilot Project in Oregon Health Authority, and also establishes a Task Force on Emergency Department Boarding.

As a coalition of 7 coordinated care organizations, our member CCOs together serve over 400,000 Oregon Health Plan members. Often those members are some of the most vulnerable and susceptible to hardship among our represented populations. We know that emergency departments are often over-utilized as a place of last resort for those experiencing crisis- medical or other wise- and we feel strongly that this program would allow communities the opportunity to address those over-utilizations in constructive, and cost-saving ways.

The overuse of emergency departments is one of the main components of unmanageable health care costs, and the ED is often accessed simply because there are no other alternatives. Too often, emergency department staff are met with social placement issues that are outside of their scope and ability to address. HB 2624 would assist in addressing the needs of those who are currently seeking care in an emergency department for this reason.

The Oregon Health Authority has highlighted the need to have an increased focus on behavioral health. HB 2624 would give the piloted emergency departments the funding needed to work with localities to find appropriate placements for those experiencing behavioral health crises.

It is especially of note that the anticipated amendment to HB 2624 calls for at least one of the piloted projects be conducted in a rural or frontier area. We firmly believe that this is a necessary addition in order to address behavioral health on a state-wide level. Additionally, the inclusion of three specific behavioral health care professionals to the proposed task force would increase the likelihood of deriving wholistic, clinically derived solutions for persons who would utilize these services.

We urge your "Aye" vote on HB 2624, and appreciate the opportunity to support this exciting program.

Sincerely,

Mary Williams
Lobbyist
Coalition for a Healthy Oregon