

Oregon Chapter
American College of
Emergency Physicians

Date: March 20, 2023

To: Sen. Deb Patterson, Chair
Sen. Cedric Hayden, Vice Chair
Senate Health Care Committee

From: Katy King, Government Relations Director
Oregon Chapter of the American College of Emergency Physicians

Subject: SB 1076 Hospital Discharge Plans for Homeless Patients

Chair Patterson, Vice Chair Hayden and members of the committee, please accept this statement for the record on behalf of OR-ACEP, the Oregon Chapter of the American College of Emergency Physicians. OR-ACEP is a medical society that has represented physicians specializing in emergency medicine since 1971 and its members share a commitment to improve emergency healthcare for all Oregonians.

OR-ACEP has concerns with SB 1076 as written. The bill requires hospitals to adopt new requirements prior to the discharge of homeless patients. In addition to the routine discharge plans for patients, there's responsibility for providing a meal, weather-appropriate clothing, medications, screening for infectious diseases, vaccinations, behavioral health follow up, assistance in enrolling in Medicaid and transportation. OR-ACEP members have great compassion for the needs of their homeless patients but these added requirements turn the emergency department into a full circle social service provider. Emergency departments do not have the human resources or physical resources to act in this manner but this bill will encourage Oregonians experiencing homelessness to come to the emergency department for any social need instead of medical emergencies. The responsibilities in this bill will only serve to increase ED boarding in the midst of the workforce shortage crisis, create more bureaucracy and paperwork without any improvement for patients.

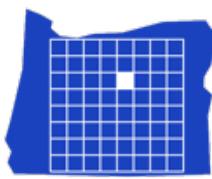
Emergency physicians are obligated by EMTALA, a federal law, to ensure patients are "stabilized" before they are discharged. If there is nowhere for the patient to be admitted and they are not safe for discharge, emergency departments are required to keep them in the emergency department until there is a safe place for them to go or their emergency medical condition has been stabilized. The logistical challenges this poses has grown more urgent during the COVID-19 Pandemic especially with workforce shortages causing our emergency departments to overflow. This bill would enormously exacerbate this already critical patient safety risk especially if it directs Oregonians

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Chapter Executive- Sierra Acker

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experiencing houselessness to the emergency department for social services instead of for life saving medical care.

OR-ACEP board members are proud to honor EMTALA requirements and to see all people regardless of their ability to pay. They also agree more services are desperately needed for the homeless population. However, this bill would require emergency departments to act as the literal social and healthcare safety net at a time when the job is already incredibly difficult and the workforce is stretched impossibly thin.

We urge your help to provide the community resources for food and shelter for homeless patients and to take other appropriate system-wide measures to alleviate their suffering. The emergency department is for everyone but it can't replace the community safety net for basic human needs.

Thank you for your consideration

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