



OFFICE OF SENATOR DEB PATTERSON

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Oregon Legislature Passes Bill Stop Bad Actors from Taking Advantage of Hospice Patients

Led by Sen. Deb Patterson, the Protecting the Dying Act strengthens vetting for hospice licenses to prevent fraud and abuse

SALEM, OR – Hospice began as a movement to provide end-of-life care for terminally ill patients. However, corporate investors have started buying up hospice agencies and reducing services as they try to maximize profits. In some states, this has led to patterns of fraud, abuse, and neglect. Today, the Oregon Legislature passed the Protecting the Dying Act (SB 1575), which enhances state oversight of hospice agencies.

“The first hospices were small nonprofits that helped people find comfort and dignity. But today, mega-corporations have figured out how to game the system and profit from the dying,” said chief sponsor **Senator Deb Patterson (D-Salem)**, chair of the Senate Health Care Committee. “Today, Oregon acted to stop bad actors from taking advantage of vulnerable patients.”

Senator Patterson began work on this issue after it was brought to her by a local hospice provider in her community. Iria Nishimura, CEO of Willamette Vital Health in Salem, said, “Hospice serves patients and families during the most vulnerable time of life. The state has a responsibility to ensure that providers entering this field are qualified, ethical, and capable of deliver high-quality care.”

In response to fraud and abuse concerns in other states, Senator Patterson convened a months-long workgroup to ensure Oregon hospice patients get the high-quality care they deserve. The Protecting the Dying Act came out of that work group’s recommendations.

“Oregon has long been a leader in protecting patient choice and quality of care, and the Protecting the Dying Act is a necessary step to uphold those values,” said Jamie Daugherty, Executive Director of the Oregon Association for Home Care. “The bill reinforces standards that ethical, patient-centered hospices already meet and expect of their peers.”

The bill requires background checks for hospice owners, establishes minimum qualifications for hospice administrators and medical directors, and prohibits people with histories of health care fraud and abuse from owning a hospice in Oregon. The bill also puts a pause on new hospice licenses, until the Oregon Health Authority updates rules for these enhanced protections.

“Hospice fraud is not a victimless crime,” said Barb Hansen, RN, CEO of the Oregon Hospice and Palliative Care Association. “Shoddy hospice providers harm patients and their families. With the Protecting the Dying Act, we can prevent fraudsters from opening up shop in Oregon.”

The bill passed in the Senate last week and today received bipartisan support in the House, passing 52 to 1. The bill now moves to the Governor’s desk to be signed into law.

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