



SENATE MAJORITY OFFICE

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Oregon Senate Democrats Advance Bill to Keep Medical Professionals at the Helm of Practices

Senate Bill 951 closes a loophole used by huge corporations to control clinics

SALEM, Ore. – A bill confirming that patient health must come first—over the profit interests of corporations—in medical practices passed the Oregon Senate today in a vote of 21 to 8. The measure closes a loophole to ensure licensed medical professionals are genuinely in control of clinics, not physicians affiliated only on paper.

“Our families and neighbors want access to quality, affordable health care, but when doctors’ offices are bought out and run by for-profit investors things get worse for patients,” said **Senate Health Care Committee Chair Deb Patterson (D – Salem)**.

Oregon law since 1947 has required that medical practices be at least 51 percent owned by medical professionals. Private equity investors and huge for-profit corporations have dodged this requirement in recent years by affiliating with a doctor who gets listed as an owner, but who does not truly have control of the practice the corporation buys. Senate Bill 951 eliminates this possibility.

“Doctors take an oath to put patient care first,” said **Senator Lisa Reynolds (D – West Portland and NE Washington County)**, a pediatrician. “Sometimes that means more than 10 minutes per patient. It can mean hiring case workers and behavioral health specialists. Amid financial responsibilities, doctors have an ethical obligation to prioritize patient needs.”

When corporate investors control a clinic, they make decisions like how much money is spent on care, what staffing levels should be, how much time should be spent with each patient, when and to whom physicians sell their ownership in the practice, and how much to charge for medical services.

A study in the New England Journal of Medicine showed that when private equity buys a clinic, costs rise by as much as 20 percent, patient time spent with the provider decreases, unnecessary procedures go up, and the risk of complications rises. In Oregon, a private-equity backed dialysis clinic in Tillamook announced it would abruptly shut down, leaving a rural, coastal community with few options. Optum's takeover of Oregon Medical Group in Eugene led to mass physician departures, leaving hundreds of patients without a primary care doctor.

Senate Bill 951 now moves to the Oregon House of Representatives, where it is championed by **House Majority Leader Ben Bowman (D – Tigard)**.

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