



## OREGON SENATE DEMOCRATS

Salem, Oregon  
Oregon State Legislature

### PRESS RELEASE

June 21, 2021

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### **Oregon Senate Approves Bill to Prohibit Discrimination in Health Care Delivery**

SALEM – Today, the Oregon Senate passed Senate Bill 567. The bill aligns state law with federal civil rights laws and will make it an unlawful practice for a medical provider to deny treatment to a patient based on race, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, age or disability. The bill also prohibits the limitation or allocation of resources based on protected class status.

“Marginalized communities have long-faced discrimination in health care delivery. This has deadly consequences for disabled, elderly, BIPOC and other communities,” said Senator Sara Gelser (D-Corvallis) who introduced and championed the measure. “The COVID-19 pandemic magnified that experience. Right here in Oregon, we saw discriminatory actions that led to everything from denial of ventilators, to prohibited access to COVID-19 testing, to inappropriate assignment to hospice care. Senate Bill 567 explicitly states that such practices are not just unacceptable in Oregon, but unlawful.”

Senate Bill 567 would establish a clear and specific prohibition on discrimination in health care, making it unlawful for a health care provider to discriminate based on a protected class by denying a patient beneficial medical treatment, or by limiting or restricting the allocation of medical resources to the patient.

The measure was inspired, in part, by a state and national discussion regarding Crisis Care Guidelines during the COVID-19 pandemic. Like many states, Oregon’s standards tended to disadvantage BIPOC communities and explicitly excluded some elderly and disabled people from access to resources and treatment. Oregon’s standards were the subject of a formal complaint filed by a broad spectrum of organizations with the United States Health and Human Services Office of Civil Rights. While that office intervened in multiple states to create new standards, the Oregon Health Authority conducted its own review of standards and rejected them as discriminatory in the fall of 2020.

“Thanks to the effective advocacy of community organizations and responsive leaders at the Oregon Health Authority, Oregon became a leader in refocusing conversations on health equity as it relates to crisis standards of care,” added Senator Gelser. “However, the fear and distrust experienced by marginalized communities is real. Oregonians need Senate Bill 567 to ensure no such standards are ever again enacted in Oregon.”

“As we address systemic oppression at many levels, we must ensure our medical care system and a commitment to health equity remain in focus,” said Senator Deb Patterson (D-Salem), who chairs the Senate Committee on Health Care. “Disparate health outcomes for vulnerable communities has been an ongoing issue and unfortunately we saw that exacerbated, especially throughout the current COVID-19 pandemic. Our health care workers have been incredible in responding to great and ever-changing needs and health emergencies. By codifying these antidiscrimination measures, we ensure all our communities receive the great care they deserve.”

Senate Bill 567 passed XX-XX and will now be considered by the House of Representatives.

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