



## **OREGON SENATE DEMOCRATS**

Salem, Oregon  
Oregon State Legislature

### **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **Senate Democrats Pass the Equal Access to Care Act**

SALEM – Today the Oregon Senate passed House Bill 2362, the Equal Access to Care Act. The bill creates a community oversight process for health care transactions such as mergers, acquisitions and other partnerships. Consolidation of health care services has been proven to lead to higher prices, but not to improved care. House Bill 2362 is a major piece in a series of bills that Senate Democrats have passed this Legislative Session to make comprehensive health care affordable and accessible.

“House Bill 2362 is a critical tool to ensure Oregon individuals and families in every part of our state are able to access the health care they deserve,” said Senator Elizabeth Steiner Hayward (D-NW Portland), who carried the bill on the Senate floor. “Time and again we have seen these mergers harm Medicaid patients, who are disproportionately BIPOC Oregonians. We also know these mergers can make access to health care exceedingly more challenging for rural communities.”

According to the Oregon Health Authority, in just four years health care prices have increased by 29%. House Bill 2362 requires the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) to convene a review board that will hold public hearings to receive input and provide recommendations on certain high impact health care mergers, acquisitions and other transactions. Impacts on cost growth, impacts to essential services, and how the transaction may affect historical and current health inequities are among the considerations the board must consider. The review board will include members of the community, consumer advocates and health care experts and will submit recommendations for approval by the Department of Consumer and Business Services or the Oregon Health Authority.

“Sixty percent of health care is paid for with public dollars. Public dollars need public accountability. With this bill, we are providing that accountability,” said Senator Deb Patterson (D-Salem), who chairs the Senate Committee on Health Care. “Health care is deeply personal. As such, it should not be treated simply as a business transaction. House Bill 2362 puts patients first, ahead of profits, and it will improve oversight, public accountability and transparency.”

House Bill passed the Senate Floor on a vote of 16-12. It now goes to the Governor for final approval.

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