



# SENATE MAJORITY OFFICE

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## NEWS RELEASE

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CONTACT: Tom Powers (503) 986-1074  
[tom.powers@state.or.us](mailto:tom.powers@state.or.us)

### **Bill to Expand Health Care Access in Rural Areas Advances** *SB 440 renews loan repayment program to bolster Oregon's health care workforce*

SALEM— With the state's demand for preventative health care services showing no signs of slowing down, a Senate committee took action this afternoon to address the shortage of primary care providers by expanding the state's loan repayment program for health care providers. The Senate Committee on Health Care and Human Services voted to advance Senate Bill 440, which provides funding for the program.

"Oregon's health care system leads the nation in integrating primary care and prevention, but we need to expand our workforce to make care available," said Senator Elizabeth Steiner Hayward (D-Beaverton), who is a family physician and the chief sponsor of Senate Bill 440. "We can do more to break down barriers to health care access in underserved areas."

In 2012, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) awarded Oregon \$1.9 billion to assist health care reform efforts that are expected to produce budget savings for federal and state governments. As a condition of participation, CMS is requiring Oregon to spend \$4 million on expanding access to primary care in rural areas or urban areas that have barriers to health care access.

"This program will help our state recruit and keep high quality primary care providers in much-needed areas," said Senator Laurie Monnes Anderson (D-Gresham), who is a public health nurse. "Giving these providers some relief on their loans will give our state a real advantage in ensuring statewide access to affordable, preventative care."

"Improving access to affordable health care is a key component of our agenda," said Senate Majority Leader Diane Rosenbaum (D-Portland). "This bill strengthens our health care workforce across the state."

The bill will now go to the Joint Ways and Means Committee for consideration.

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