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Legislation to reduce costs, expand health care access passes Senate *SB 24 provides opportunities for Oregonians to take advantage of telemedicine*

SALEM – Legislation supporting technological advances in medical care found support in the Oregon Senate this morning. Senate Bill 24 advances the practice of telemedicine, the use of teleconferencing technology for physicians to consult with one another and their patients.

“We’re dedicated to looking at any option for improving health care efficiency,” said Deputy Senate Majority Leader Laurie Monnes Anderson (D-Gresham), chair of Senate Health Care & Veterans’ Affairs Committee. “This is an example of a health care delivery system that makes sense for patients and physicians, is cost effective, and saves time.”

Access to health care services, especially specialists, is a major challenge for rural Oregon in particular. By allowing patients to seek consultation through telemedicine, patients and physicians will save time and money.

“In some cases, telemedicine allows Oregonians to get the opinion of a specialist without spending an entire day traveling to another part of the state,” said Senator Alan Bates (D-Ashland), a physician from Southern Oregon. “Many are already utilizing this technology. This legislation paves the way for expansion and further efficiency in our health care system.”

The legislation passed today is part of the Senate Democrats’ commitment to working towards expanding access to quality, affordable health care for Oregonians.

“We are taking the conversation about health care reform very seriously this session. Passage of SB 24 is one way to our caucus is working to address nationwide crisis of health care cost and access,” said Senate Majority Leader Richard Devlin (D-Tualatin).

One of the biggest barriers to the full deployment of telemedicine services in Oregon is the lack of a single statewide policy governing reimbursement of costs – even though telemedicine can significantly lower costs in many cases. SB 24 sets that standard for reimbursement, expanding opportunities for Oregonians and their physicians to take advantage of the benefits of telemedicine.

The bill will now go to the House for consideration.

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