Oregon House and Senate Pass First-In-Nation Nurse Practitioner Payment Parity Bill

HB 2902 B Now Goes to Governor Kitzhaber to Be Signed Into Law

Salem, OR - Today, the Oregon House of Representatives unanimously passed House Bill 2902 B, bringing Oregon one step closer to being the first state in the country to require private insurers to reimburse primary care and mental health nurse practitioners, physician assistants and physicians at the same rates when performing the same work and billing under the same codes. The bill now goes to Governor John Kitzhaber to be signed into law. The Oregon Nurses Association (ONA) and the Nurse Practitioners of Oregon (NPO) were the primary authors of the legislation.

Across Oregon, nurse practitioners (NP) and physician assistants (PA) provide vital primary care and mental health services to patients in their communities, in some cases acting as the only provider of such care. In 2009, a number of private insurance companies made dramatic cuts to some reimbursement rates paid to non-physician providers which, in turn, seriously limited patient access to these essential services.

“Insurance reimbursement cuts have had a huge impact on my bottom line as a business owner, and my ability to treat complicated patients,” said Linda Morley, a Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner in Salem, OR. “With HB 2902, I’ll be paid equitably and will be able to open my practice to more patients.”

“As Oregon seeks to implement health care reforms that increase patient access and prioritize primary care, a robust network of primary care providers is critical,” said Susan King, RN, the Executive Director of ONA. “We have a primary care provider shortage and this legislation will help ensure that nurse practitioners and physician assistants continue to be at the heart of addressing that shortage.”

Oregon has long led the nation in nurse practitioner practice. Oregon NPs have practiced independently, without the supervision of a physician, since ONA helped pass legislation in 1979.

Stephen Rooney, RN, President of ONA and the National Federation of Nurses, said, “Passage of 2902 B is another example of the forward thinking, creative way in which Oregon
addresses health care access and reform. This is a truly historic vote and one that will provide leadership to the rest of nation.”

House Bill 2902 B, amended by the Senate before passing the House, will also create a Task Force on Primary and Mental Health Care Reimbursement to study and make recommendations to 2014 and 2015 regular sessions of Legislative Assembly on payment structure for primary care and mental health care workforce in Oregon.

###

###

###