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Feb. 6, 2013

The Honorable Greg Walden
U.S. House of Representatives
2182 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Rep. Walden,

On behalf of Providence Hood River Memorial Hospital, I want to offer our endorsement of the Critical Access Hospital Flexibility Act of 2013. This proposed legislation would allow small, remote hospitals to provide important acute care services to rural communities across the country.

Providence Health & Services operates seven Critical Access Hospitals throughout the Pacific Northwest, including two in Oregon. These hospitals are both a vital source of access to health care and a major employer for their communities.

In Hood River, we are challenged with the current CAH 25-bed limit during time of increased patient need, such as:

- Significant population increases during tourism season;
- Influenza endemics; and
- Limited ability to transfer patients in severe weather.

In addition, there are times when we can improve cost by partnering with community providers to “batch” patient appointments. This increases patient satisfaction and improves quality while reducing costs, but it reduces available beds in the hospital and can cause unnecessary patient transfers.

The flexibility established in this bill allows our remote hospitals to maintain their CAH status – and their corresponding cost-basis payment, while responding to health care transformation within our delivery system. It also allows these hospitals to achieve the Triple Aim of providing affordable services, improving population health and delivering the best care experience. Maintaining the CAH designation for these hospitals is essential because they serve communities with disproportionately large numbers of Medicare, Medicaid and uninsured patients.

We applaud your leadership on behalf of rural health care and look forward to working with you on this and other vital health care issues. Please feel free to contact me at 541-387-6456 or edward.freysinger@providence.org, or you can contact Michael Becker, regional director of advocacy and government affairs at 503-893-6303, or by email at michael.becker2@providence.org.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ed Freysinger". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent initial "E".

Ed Freysinger
Chief Executive
Providence Hood River Memorial Hospital
Columbia Gorge Service Area