



May 10, 2023

Morrow County Board of Commissioners
P.O. Box 788
Heppner, OR 97836

Submitted electronically to rvanderwall@co.morrow.or.us

Re: Morrow County Ambulance Service Area Plan

The Oregon Association of Hospitals and Health Systems (OAHHS) is a mission-driven, nonprofit association representing Oregon's 62 community hospitals. Together, hospitals are the sixth largest private employer statewide, employing more than 70,000 employees. Committed to fostering a stronger, safer Oregon with equitable access to quality health care, OAHHS provides services to Oregon's community hospitals ensuring all are able to deliver dependable, comprehensive health care to their communities; educates government officials and the public on the state's health landscape; and works collaboratively with stakeholders to build consensus on and advance health care policy benefiting the state's four million residents.

Hospitals are more than just buildings; they are cornerstones within the communities they serve. Our hospitals are employers, partners in community projects, and community spaces—all while providing vital health services to generation after generation of families in communities across Oregon. We know that when our hospitals are strong, our communities win.

Of the 62 Oregon community hospitals, 33 are in rural and frontier communities. These hospitals provide health care services to more than one million Oregonians and are anchor tenants within their communities. In most areas, they are the largest employer, offering family-wage jobs and economic stability. Rural hospitals in Oregon, like Morrow County Health District's Pioneer Memorial Hospital, are actively focused on the Triple Aim goals of better care, better health, and lower cost while maintaining the highest levels of quality care.

Many rural communities in Oregon struggle to keep their hospitals and other health care services viable. Closure of a hospital or the loss of a critical service, like ambulance service, is devastating to a community and detrimental to the health of the people in the community and surrounding areas. We are concerned that without continuity within Morrow County's Ambulance Service Plan, there may be a loss of health services to Morrow County residents.

It is for these reasons that we ask you to prudently consider the future of your Ambulance Service Plan and the impacts of your decision on the short-term and long-term access to emergency and health care services for all patients in the county.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Becky Hultberg".

Becky Hultberg
President & Chief Executive Officer
Oregon Association of Hospitals & Health Systems