



January 7, 2022

Director Patrick Allen
Oregon Health Authority
Attn: Michelle Hatfield
500 Summer St. NE, 5th Floor, E65
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Director Allen,

The Association for Clinical Oncology (ASCO) is writing to express concerns with certain provisions of the [Oregon Health Plan 1115 Demonstration Waiver Application for Renewal](#) put forth by the Oregon Health Authority (OHA). Specifically, the proposed closed formulary may prevent Oregon Health Plan (OHP) patients with cancer from getting the best treatment.

ASCO is a national organization representing physicians who care for people with cancer. With nearly 45,000 members, our core mission is to ensure that cancer patients have meaningful access to high quality cancer care.

The proposal to implement a restrictive formulary, in some instances with only one drug per therapeutic class, is a significant concern for continued access and potential health outcomes for OHP cancer patients. We are encouraged by the mitigation strategies to address unintended consequences, but the policies outlined in this proposal could delay care, prevent access to the most appropriate treatment for a patient's disease, and jeopardize chances of a successful outcome.

Prescription drugs have different indications, different mechanisms of action, and different side effects, depending on the diagnosis and comorbidities of an individual patient. While we acknowledge some of the best cancer drugs have a high cost, restricting OHP's drug benefits to such a tightly restricted formulary would limit the ability of providers to make the best medical decisions for the care of their patients. Cancer patients represent a special population that should be largely exempt from regulations intended to restrict access or limit doses, in recognition of the unique nature of the disease, its treatment, and potentially life-long sequelae. Cancer is a heterogeneous disease, with some forms experiencing high rates of mortality and others having an indolent biology extending over many years. Patients suffering from chronic, life-threatening conditions need a guarantee of access to the appropriate prescription drugs critical to treating their disease.

ASCO applauds the Oregon Health Authority's efforts in working to deliver greater access to care for the state's most vulnerable patients. If you have questions or would like assistance on any issue involving the care of individuals with cancer, please contact Aaron Segel at ASCO at aaron.segel@asco.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "H. Burris III", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Howard A. Burris III, MD, FACP, FASCO
Chair of the Board
Association for Clinical Oncology