



## **Statement on Oregon POLST Separation from National POLST**

Over the past 25 years, the Physician Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatment, or POLST, program has grown out of concern of honoring patient preferences about care at the close of life ([Oregon POLST History](#)). The goal of the Oregon POLST Program is to provide a method to ensure that seriously ill persons and their families are able to make informed choices about their care. To preserve public trust, it is important that POLST programs are beyond reproach by not accepting funding from health care related industries that potentially would create a conflict of interest between the goals of the POLST program of honoring patient preferences and a possible focus on cost savings that would benefit industry.

Oregon's POLST program grew into a national model for end-of-life care and many states began seeking assistance in implementing POLST programs in their states. Eventually a national office was formed at the Oregon Health & Science University (OHSU) and then expanded and began operating independently from OHSU in January of 2017.

Oregon POLST learned in early 2017 that National POLST changed its policy to accept industry funding. This creates an inherent conflict of interest between the interests of patients and those of industry. This conflict of interest does not reflect our values and compromises the goals of the founders of POLST. Due to this policy change, we were no longer able to support national POLST efforts and ended our affiliation in June of 2017.

The primary goal of POLST programs is to advocate for patients so that their end-of-life care wishes are honored and to ensure that they receive the treatments they want and avoid those they don't want. We disagree with National POLST on how to best achieve that goal. The Oregon POLST Program will continue to innovate, share our materials, expand our quality assurance program, and share best practices.

### **Questions**

#### **1. Why did you leave?**

Oregon POLST learned in early 2017 that National POLST changed its policy to allow accepting industry funding. Since its inception, POLST has focused on enabling patients to choose what kind of care they wish to receive when nearing the end of life. The program has never been about benefits to industry or cost savings and we do not intend to support efforts that are linked to industry funding. Given national policy changes, the Oregon Program was no longer able to support the National POLST Program and chose to end our affiliation.

#### **2. What values and policies are you objecting to?**

Oregon POLST feels strongly that the funding to support these efforts must be held to higher standards – to ensure the public trust. Paramount to the POLST movement is that

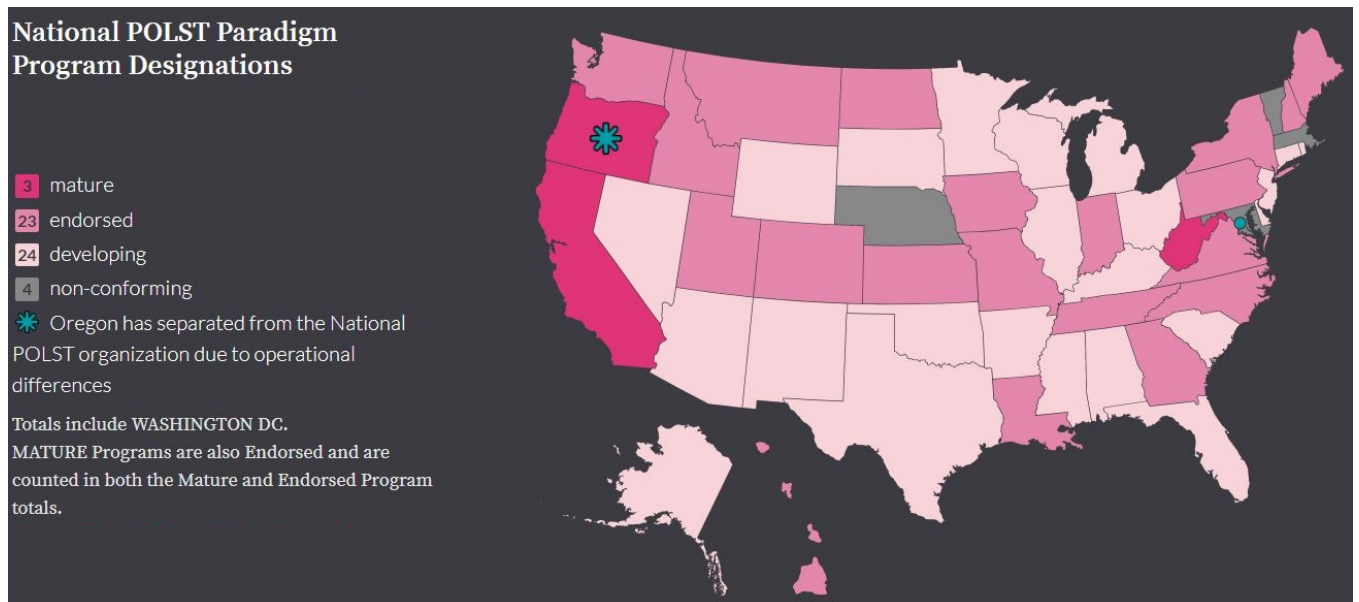
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decisions and medical orders are always based on patient voluntary and informed wishes and not influenced by potential measures or incentives that have the primary intent to benefit industry. In Oregon, we will continue to exclude funding from health care industry sources to avoid any perceived, potential or actual conflicts of interest.

### 3. What does this mean?

This means that we are no longer a part of the National POLST governance board and will not be participating in events, activities and initiatives led by National POLST. Our top priority is protecting the integrity of the POLST program and we believe it is necessary to distance ourselves from National POLST so long as they continue to accept industry funding.



Source: National POLST Paradigm. (2018). POLST program designations. Retrieved from <http://polst.org/programs-in-your-state/?pro=1>