

Testimony in Support of SB 469  
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Chair Monnes Anderson and Members of the Committee:

I write today to urge your strong support of SB 469, reforms to Oregon's nurse staffing law. I am a nurse in the Eugene-Springfield area, practicing in a cardiopulmonary unit of a large hospital. I've been practicing nursing for over 13 years. I am a member of my hospital's staffing committee, the Oregon Nurses Staffing Collaborative, and serve as a member of the Oregon Nurses Association's (ONA) Cabinet on Health Policy.

I am thrilled with the progress Oregon has made to extend health coverage to more Oregonians. Through my work, I've seen firsthand how this coverage has improved the lives of so many people. While providing coverage is an important step, it is equally important that when a patient arrives at a hospital that they get safe care. Safe care is why I am asking for your support of SB 469.

With the passage of the ACA, the hospital where I work looked to cut costs anywhere they could. They implemented a hiring freeze a little over two years ago, and waited until we were, in my opinion, dangerously short staffed, to fill some of the vacant positions. We were operating at critical staffing levels most of the time. Some nurses worked consecutive 16 hour shifts for two months straight. CNAs, at times, were asked to take care of 17-18 patients.

From my perspective, rather than making an effort to provide safe care while managing the budget, the facility where I work seems solely focused on the budget. The net income for the hospital last year was \$141,606,599, approximately 12.6 percent of the operating margin, and nearly twice other hospitals in the state.

As conditions continue to deteriorate, staff filed record numbers of Staffing Request Documentation Forms with hospital administration and ONA. When this effort on part of the nurses was ignored, many nurses filed reports with the Oregon Health Authority (OHA), and multiple deficiencies were cited. Still, administration's clear focus remained budgetary.

The hospitalists I work with, most of the time are working 16 hour days and have been told they need to improve their productivity. Conditions are so bad that they've chosen to join a union. At this point in time, my expectation is that things will get much worse.

I urge your support of SB 469. Oregon's nurses and patients deserve safe staffing levels in hospitals throughout the state.