

Jacqueline Dillon, RN

Testimony in Support of SB 469

February 16, 2015

Chair Monnes Anderson and members of the committee:

My name is Jacqueline Dillon. I am a Registered Nurse from Corvallis. I practice in Progressive Care unit of a medium sized hospital.

I am writing to urge your support of SB 469--ONA's Hospital Nurse Staffing bill.

The role of a nurse is very diverse. A nurse is the part of the health care team who gives most of the hands on care. We are the final check before a medication or treatment is given. In our many roles and functions the one that is always most important is our role as a patient advocate. In a world where things are often broke down to cost or efficiency, a nurse is often at odds always working for what is best for the patient. This can put us at odds with our management when we need more staff and odds with our patients when we make them get up after they have just had surgery or tell them can't eat before.

It is in my role as advocate that I address you today. I have been put in unsafe situations as a nurse. The reason why I started getting involved with staffing issues boils down to one day. I work on the progressive care unit. For those who are unsure of what that is, it is a critical care unit. Patients are admitted there when they need closer monitoring than a medical unit can provide. Patients that are having a heart attack or that have had open heart surgery but no longer need to be in the ICU. These are high acuity (meaning the amount of care and time needed to monitor and provide care is high.) On this day we were short staffed and all the nurses had the maximum of patients regardless of acuity. Then one Nurse had a patient that went into a fatal arrhythmia, she had to be at the beside with her patient. The other nurses on the floor who were already maxed had to assume care of her other patients and at the same time be there to help her. We called management over and over again and we told there was nothing they could do and there was no one they could send to help. The patient did survive but none of the patients on the floor that day got the care they should have.

That is the day I decided to get involved. I joined the staffing committee at the hospital. I advocated for getting more staff and providing better ratios. I became familiar with the staffing law as it is now and have become familiar with how easily it can be cast aside if it is determined that it is necessary or unavoidable and how enforcement is an issue. This is a law in desperate need of some changes. I am asking you to help me be an advocate for my patients and my patients in the future.

I urge your support of SB 469 to ensure all of Oregon's nurses have a voice in ensuring adequate staffing for their patients.