

Advocating for Oregon's Hospitals & the Patients They Serve

Committee: Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Human Services
Bill: SB 469-8
From: Andi Easton, on behalf of OAHHS
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Committee Chairs Senator Bates and Representative Nathanson and members of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Human Services, on behalf of Oregon's 62 acute care hospitals, the Oregon Association of Hospitals and Health Systems (OAHHS) appreciates the opportunity to comment on Senate Bill 469-8.

Oregon hospitals support this legislation as currently amended. We have worked closely and collaboratively with our nurse partners to arrive at this carefully-crafted compromise language, which will benefit patients, nurses and acute care hospitals.

SB 469-8 reinforces and strengthens hospital nurse staffing committees. These vital structures enable nurse leaders and direct care staff to come together in equal numbers and under shared leadership to generate nurse staffing plans that appropriately address the unique needs of their patients and facilities. These staffing committees also provide a safe venue to constructively address staffing challenges and to collaboratively explore new ideas for optimizing patient care.

Importantly, this legislation does not attempt to impose nurse-to-patient ratios, which fail to account for differing severity levels of patients illnesses, conditions and injuries as it relates to the the skill set of available staff. Such ratios erode the professional autonomy of registered nurses, who need the flexibility to make real-time professional judgments about what is right for patient care. Nurse staffing plans generated by balanced nurse staffing committees, as this legislation supports, provide a more effective and nuanced approach for determining optimal nurse staffing levels.

As proposed by this legislation, hospitals appreciate the new predictability that will come with nurse staffing audits timed to coincide with regular hospital licensure visits, as well as set timelines for investigation of nurse staffing complaints. . These changes will support the timely and appropriate action to correct deficiencies. Finally, we support the common sense staffing plan exceptions that permit suspension of existing protocols during emergency conditions.

In summary, SB 476-8 represents a significant improvement from previous versions of the legislation. We are proud of the collaborative work we have done with our nurse partners to create a bill that will strengthen Oregon's nurse staffing law, creating a win for patients, nurses and hospitals. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this important legislation.