



Testimony in Opposition to House Bill 2454

April 3, 2019

House Committee on Economic Development

Deborah Riddick JD, RN

Good afternoon Chair Lively, Vice Chairs Bonham and Fahey, and members of the committee. My name is Deborah Riddick. I am the Director of Government Relations for the Oregon Nurses Association (ONA). We represent 15,000 registered nurses throughout the state and the Nurse Practitioners of Oregon. Our organization is committed to safe nursing practice and to upholding our state's high nursing standards. Consistent with that commitment, we strongly oppose HB 2454, primarily, on the issues of consistency, public safety, and liability.

The hard work and sacrifice that professional licensure reflects is, for our membership, a sentinel and life-changing privilege. Our nurse members take pride in obtaining their Oregon licensure and that privilege is not taken lightly. The process for nursing licensure ensures that Oregon nurses have been vetted educationally, clinically, and personally. HB 2454 offers a process that establishes a deference to out-of-state applicants that is not afforded to Oregon nursing licensees. By allowing these external candidates to practice for 2 years without complete verification of state requirements would set them apart from their Oregon counterparts. This extended waiver may negatively impact the moral of our current work force. An influx of nurses who have not satisfied our own statutory requirements disregards the impact on Oregon nurses and the unintended consequences at the bedside.

HB 2454 would place unsuspecting patients, when they are most vulnerable, at an unnecessary risk. Statutory requirements are in place in support of public health and patient safety. To allow unverified licensees access to our most vulnerable citizens is a breach of trust. Also, in the interest of patient consent and transparency, these providers would be ethically obligated to inform patients that their licensure was provisional; the bill doesn't speak to this concern. Across many studies, and for more than 16 years, nursing has been identified as the most trusted profession. This bill puts that patient trust and our nursing reputation at risk for the sake of expediency of process.

Lastly, because HB 2454 dramatically extends the time at which the OSBN would reconsider or revoke an applicant's license, the ONA has concerns about liability. During the 2 years that these licensees are permitted to practice, without meeting all the statutory requirements, employers and Oregon nurses are exposed to potential liability for negligent acts performed alongside these licensees. As we are working hard to improve care and reduce costs, this bill increases financial exposure and could result in higher costs to the system.

The ONA understands that our current provider shortage inhibits the provision of health services and strains our existing system. Our nurses are on frontlines and, despite these challenges, continue to provide high-quality care throughout the state. We do not believe a fast-track to care is in the best interest of our patients, our nurses, our employers or our State. We urge you to oppose HB 2454.