



Testimony in Support of House Bill 2016

April 18, 2019

Senate Committee on Workforce

Lillian Nickerson, RN

Chair Taylor, Vice-Chair Knopp and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony in support of House Bill 2016, the Oregon Public Worker Protection Act. I would like to begin by saying that the following testimony speaks solely to my own experience and opinion and does not represent the opinions or views of my wonderful employer, Oregon Health and Science University. My name is Lillian Nickerson and I am a registered nurse and proud Oregon Nurses Association member, currently working at OHSU in Family Medicine in Columbia County. ONA represents over 15,000 nurses across the state working in a variety of direct care environments, including several thousand that serve patients who access or otherwise rely on receiving their care through highly-skilled public sector settings like mine.

HB 2016 comprises a sensible set of policies that would simply codify best practices that remain commonplace today in many represented public sector workplaces. The core provisions of the bill reflect many standards that have existed in my work setting for many years and served to best encourage labor peace as well as a more cooperative atmosphere. I would like to briefly illustrate how some of the key provisions of the bill have functioned in practice in my employment to date and the important effect this has had in yielding positive outcomes in our workplace.

As an OHSU nurse my new employee orientation included an hour-long roundtable orientation with an ONA representative. During this meeting I was able to learn about some of the benefits I would receive as a union-member, including how ONA representation works throughout the organization, where to turn if conflict arises, and how the union supports safe labor practices. As the great-granddaughter of a New Jersey Teamster organizer I grew up with labor values and was elated to learn the ins and outs of my union membership at this orientation. For a nurse entering without much knowledge of organized labor, however, the education received during this new-employee orientation is absolutely vital to understanding the invaluable benefit of having representation in the workplace. It opens the gates for these employees to be able to seek resources for workplace policies, resolve disputes, and enforce the labor standards that allow nurses to deliver the best care possible to our patients.

In my previous position as floor nurse on Marquam Hill I witnessed the value of employees being able to meet for union-related business during meals and breaks. This allowance made it possible for all members of our unit to have a voice when staffing grids were being re-aligned, and for all stakeholders to be present during these disputes without making union involvement an extra burden only available to those with time to spare outside of regular work days. I strongly believe that having the opportunity to conduct union business during breaks is a benefit to all parts of an organization as it creates an environment where ownership of policy and practice is not siloed to the few with their ears to the ground, but where this ownership is shared among all those employees who are living the realities of these policies on a daily basis. The basic standards that this bill would enact reflect practices that have been routine in my workplaces for many years and generally regarded as beneficial for all parties involved in union represented public settings.

HB 2016 looks to clarify existing law for our public sector workplaces and would streamline a reasonable framework of provisions in statute that are well-known to promote harmony in unionized employment settings. On behalf of the Oregon Nurses Association, I urge your support for HB 2016 to help best ensure that appropriate unified standards are enacted in support of the best interests of workers, public



employers and successful outcomes for the patients who depend on us each day to deliver effective care in the most highly professional environments possible.

Thank you.

Lillian Nickerson, RN