



December 8, 2022

Dear Chair Nosse, Vice Chairs Moore-Green and Reynolds and Members of the House Committee on Behavioral Health,

Thank you for the opportunity to share the workforce perspective of the AFSCME represented Oregon State Hospital Doctors and Nurses on the impact of the Mosman decision. I am Dr. Amit Bhavan, Vice President of AFSCME Local 3327, the psychiatrists at OSH.

The past few years have seen unprecedented change and strain fall upon the Oregon State Hospital. Since the Aid & Assist population is now the dominant jurisdiction, treatment services are more geared towards restoring trial competency, and much more time and resources are dedicated to addressing the increased acuity in our hospital. The Aid & Assist population brings unique challenges to the hospital due to their 1) Higher acuity related to their refractory symptoms, 2) Most of these patients are houseless and require extensive services in the community, making placement a difficult task, 3) Despite the high acuity, we are not staffed as an acute care facility, and 4) Judge Mosman's ruling speeds up the turnover with shorter timelines of treatment - all of these factors contribute to a depleted morale and burned-out workforce. Despite these challenges, we have happily served ALL patients at the Oregon State Hospital, but recognize the need for more funding to provide extra staffing resources to meet these new demands.

Our union has recently been involved in addressing systemic issues affecting staffing and workplace violence. For example, in June 2022, the leaders of my local, AFSCME 3327 representing the OSH physicians and AFSCME Local 3295 representing the nurses collaborated with hospital management on an FTE staffing analysis to help find appropriate staff levels to deal with the acuity and rapid turnover of patients. Our analysis showed that physician staffing needs to be increased by about 33%. We are hopeful that the upcoming legislative funds will be allocated towards this goal of improving staffing at OSH. Also, the recent investigation by OSHA on workplace violence provided the physician union an opportunity to speak up. In August, my local sent a letter to OHA leadership asking them to work with multiple community stakeholders in addressing the harm caused by patients whose behavior needs additional supports. Without appropriate staffing and the ability to appropriately respond when individuals are having elevated behavior, the Oregon State Hospital cannot provide a healing environment. Additionally, when staff are constantly at an elevated stress level our ability to provide the best possible care and treatment is diminished. All at OSH - patients and employees need a safe and supportive environment, and the environment we have currently isn't. This environment adds to the complexities in providing adequate treatment in the court ordered timelines and contributes to the high level of burnout and turnover in staff. We hope to continue



collaborating with our Governing Body and leaders of OHA - your funding would go a long way to easing the burden of the many challenges we face.

I hope this perspective of OSH will help bring recognition to the vital work that is done. In order to keep up with the changes mentioned, we need funding to properly address treatment of higher acuity patients, resolve staffing shortages, and also aid in retention and recruitment - with a goal of securing pay equity to our neighboring state forensic facilities who are offering much more to physicians and nurses. I appreciate the time you have taken to hear our perspective at the Oregon State Hospital. We appreciate your consideration for funding our staffing needs, and helping us provide "Hope, Safety, and Recovery" for all of those in need. We welcome any questions, comments, or suggestions.

Sincerely,

Dr Amit Bhavan  
Vice President  
AFSCME Local 3327