



Testimony in Support of HB 3016

May 5, 2021

Senate Committee On Health Care

Karla Toms, RN, BSN

Hello Chair Patterson, Vice-Chair Knopp and members of the committee.

My name is Karla Toms. I am a registered nurse (RN) and have been a member of Oregon Nurses Association (ONA) for the past 16 years. My testimony today is in support of HB 3016. I am honored to represent and testify on behalf of the thousands of ONA registered nurses.

I support HB 3016. Oregon's Nurse Staffing Law serves as a national model, providing high quality patient care, resulting from the ongoing collaboration between nursing professionals and the facilities in which they work.

My professional experience of over 20 years as a registered nurse has shown me that planning for emergencies is a fundamental part of patient safety. We frequently practice emergency codes such as what to do if a patient is in cardiac arrest, how to handle violent attackers and what to do in case of a fire. We have processes that we do not deviate from because having a plan saves lives.

With this foundation of practice, I found it horrendous that our hospital did not seem to have an emergency staffing plan that had already been filtered through our nurse lead staffing committee. This resulted in nothing short of chaos during this current pandemic. Once the state of emergency had been issued and our hospital administration implemented their "surge plan", our current staffing plan was completely disregarded.

When hospital administrators make decisions about patient care/staffing models without the in-put of the nurses who are actually at the bedside, dangerous conditions can result. In this case, many units ended up being very short staffed with caregivers working overtime, extra shifts and short rest between shifts. Exhausted nurses cannot be expected to provide the safe care that our patients are entitled to.

At the same time many nurses were left with little to no work at all to support our own families during this state of emergency. We were told this new "staffing model" would continue for an unknown period of time. This is unacceptable and cannot be allowed to happen again. I firmly believe that if our staffing committee had vetted the plan in advance, this disturbing paradigm could have been averted completely.

Unfortunately, insufficient funding to support OHA's implementation has prevented effective oversight, inconsistent with current law. This bill, which received broad Senate and House support during our 2020 legislative session, would provide the necessary funding to bring the department into compliance to ensure staffing plan deficiencies are addressed in a timely manner.

I support HB 3016, and I ask that you vote favorably to move the bill out of committee. Thank you for your time and I appreciate you hearing my testimony today.

Sincerely,
Karla Toms, RN, BSN