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**Oregon Legislature**

SB1549

Dear Oregon legislature officials,

I am a “traveler/ agency” nurse that will be directly impacted from your SB1549. I am opposed to this bill. This is an unfair attack on my job and my ability to do my job. I am a highly skilled Emergency Department nurse that has worked very hard over my many years to have the ability to be an agency nurse. Agency or Traveler nurses are a specialty like many other nursing specialties that requires us to be able to quickly and accurately take care of our patients. Each assignment has new computer medical records, different equipment, different supplies, different protocols and much more. Oftentimes when I get my assignment I have 4 hours or less training to then be independently taking care of my own patients. As an agency nurse, I often work in hostile and under staffed environments with overworked and at times poorly educated core staff. I am floated to anywhere in the hospital (ER, medical/surgical, telemetry, step down units, rehab, ICU, oncology), and must be able to step into those roles quickly and efficiently. My ability to take care of my patients in these types of environments is a skill. Like any other specialty nursing job, my advanced skills should be compensated. There is no “call to action” for any other type of higher paid skilled nurse, so I am not sure why there is one for my skill set. By limiting my ability to get appropriate compensation for my skill set, you are only going to increase the need for nurses in Oregon. Although my primary residence is in Oregon, I will have to go elsewhere to seek appropriate wages for the work that I do.

I understand that some view our wages as excessive, however we have to maintain two households (my primary residence here in Oregon and the secondary residence that I have to stay in to work far away from my home). I do not get the benefits that a staff nurse does ( disability, sick leave, tax shelters, health insurance) and my contracts are for typically 13weeks at a time, which means there are often weeks in between my contracts that I am not paid at all. I got very sick one year and was out of work for over two months,

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unpaid. This was difficult for my family. The higher wages allowed me to stay afloat until I was able to pick up another contract.

My wages have to sustain my bills and mortgage until I am able to pick up a new contract, which can have several weeks between them. These contracts are not guaranteed, which means they can cancel you at any time for no reason and you are the first to be called off. This is one of the reasons the pay is increased, to allow for the times that you do not have income. Unlike a staff nurse that has a schedule and can plan their financials around their missed time, we are not afforded this. Agency wages are higher than staff nurses because it is a way to make the uncertainties of the income manageable.

If this legislature is passed, we will lose highly qualified, highly skilled nurses to other states and it will only increase our current nursing shortages. This is not the time to lose more nurses and definitely not the appropriate way to reduce healthcare costs. We, the nurses, were “Heroes” last year and this year we are targets. I have worked throughout the pandemic in a wide variety of conditions. I have shown up and done my job. Please do not pass this legislature, it's not fair and it's not right.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Amie Ferdig', with a stylized, cursive script.

Amie Ferdig RB, BSN,CEN