

## What's Happening

- **Oregon has more licensed nurses than ever**—approximately 73,000 —with about 54,000 actively practicing (as of 2022).
- **Out-of-state nurses drive growth:** for every Oregon graduate, four nurses licensed in other states move here. Key states include Texas, Florida, California, and Washington.
- **Many nurses are leaving traditional direct care roles** for alternative careers (e.g., nurse coaching, case management) or flexible travel/temporary work.
- **Workplace dissatisfaction leads to high turnover**—more than 30% of nurses leave their jobs within the first year.

## The Real Problem: More “Leaky Bucket,” Less Shortages

### Why the Term “Nursing Shortage” Misses the Mark:

- Employers face chronic vacancies in long-term care, community-based settings, and rural areas despite record-high nurse numbers.
- Solutions focused solely on increasing nurse supply (e.g., funding nursing programs, K-12 pipeline initiatives) fail to address retention issues.
- Oregon's nursing workforce operates like a "leaky bucket": new nurses enter, but unhealthy work environments drive them away.

## Policy Solutions: Strengthen and Sustain the Workforce

### Stabilize Today's Workforce:

- Enact policies to improve retention while maintaining investments in nursing education.
- Incentivize employer programs that ease transitions for nurses, such as residency programs for new graduates or upskilling for those moving between care settings.

### Protect Nurses in the Workplace:

- Address physical, mental, and emotional risks in healthcare roles.
- Prioritize workplace safety legislation to reduce violence and promote anti-bullying measures in healthcare settings.

### Shift Focus:

- Reframe the conversation from “nursing shortages” to sustainable workforce solutions that improve conditions, retain talent, and fill critical vacancies.

### For More Information

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