



February 1, 2023

Chair Nosse, Vice-Chairs Nelson and Goodwin, and members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Emerson Hamlin, and I am a political organizer for the Oregon Nurses Association. We represent 15,000 health care providers, including RNs, advanced practice nurses, and allied health workers. Our members work in local health departments in seven counties in Oregon: Multnomah, Clatsop, Coos, Klamath, Benton, Marion, and Washington. Our public health nurses are an asset to this state, and we are proud to support House Bill 2773 so that they can be better supported in their work.

As our public health nurses often tell us, public health has been historically under resourced, and it is challenging to attract and retain nurses. For potential public health nurses, the cost of nursing school is one of the largest barriers to entry. Even after attending school, many nurses interested in public health are forced to take other, higher paying jobs to pay back their student loans. Additionally, retention is a challenge, in part because public health nurses are serving some of our most vulnerable community members. Many of their patients are unhoused, and lack basic resources, creating more need than one nurse can address. As a result, many of our public health nurses report experiencing burnout and moral injury.

House Bill 2773 will not solve decades of underfunding, but it is a critical start in ensuring that vulnerable populations can receive the care they deserve, from a robust and healthy workforce. Our nurses especially appreciated that scholarships, tuition assistance, and student loan forgiveness and repayment assistance were included in this bill. ONA urges your support. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Emerson Hamlin

Political Organizer at Oregon Nurses Association