

Submitter: S O

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Behavioral Health and Health Care

Measure: HB2697

I am an Oregon nurse writing to express my support of HB 2697. In my experience serving on our Hospital Nurse Staffing Committee, there is nothing in place to compel our hospital leadership to follow the current nurse staffing law. Despite years of work by our committee, the overwhelming majority of our hospital's staffing plans remain unapproved. Staffing continues to be based solely on budget rather than the needs of patients. When we start our 12 hour shifts, it is never guaranteed that we will be able to take a break and much of the time, we don't. Complaints made to the Oregon Health Authority sit uninvestigated for years. As a result, there is nothing to hold institutions accountable.

Hospital lobbyists will oppose this bill for it's financial penalties to hospitals who continue to violate the nurse staffing law. Despite having many years to come into compliance with the staffing law, our institution continues to defer and/or reject creating staffing plans that meet the letter of the law. The proverbial can will continue to be kicked further down the road unless there is enforcement of the staffing law. Our institution chooses to employ a personal medical concierge for its wealthy donors salaried at 90K/year, but will refuse to staff up a nurse for 12 hours when the acuity of a unit is too high to safely manage. That is deplorable. At the absolute bare minimum, a hospital should provide a safe environment for patients and staff. Likewise, it should not be up for debate whether an employer should provide legally entitled breaks to its staff.

Nurses are desperately trying to fulfill their professional, moral, and institutional standards in environments that make it impossible to do so. We all entered this profession to help others and are leaving in droves because we cannot fulfill our ethical obligations to patients. It is shameful that nurses are unable to leave the bedside to use the restroom or eat. Our work is chaotic, dangerous, and we are overburdened. Healthcare should never be chaotic and dangerous. Can you imagine getting on a plane if our flight crews described their work in this way? Our families, children, and community deserve safe care. We need a law that holds hospitals accountable. Thank you.