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RE: HB 2697 (Nurse Staffing)

Good afternoon members of the House Committee on Behavioral Health and Health Care.

My name is Terri Kaiser and I am a nurse at Oregon Health and Science University-Hillsboro Medical Center (Formerly Tualaity).

I am the nurse co-chair for the staffing committee at OHSU-Hillsboro Medical Center. Last spring, our committee met to reviewing the Staffing Request and Documentation Forms (SRDF) that had been submitted by nurses indicating a lack of staff for a particular unit, day and shift.

As we discussed these reports, one of the managers responded by saying "Well, what would you have us do when we don't have the staff? Go ahead and fill out your forms, nothing will be done about it, nobody really cares."

The sad fact is that this isn't just the opinion of one of the managers at my hospital, it is the reality of the state of Oregon's enforcement of the state's current safe staffing law.

We know that hospitals throughout the state consistently and regularly ignore the requirements of our safe staffing law, and yet the Oregon Health Authority does nothing to enforce those requirements.

What was an effective and useful law 20 years ago is no longer able to meet the staffing crisis we are currently facing, in large part because Oregon's hospital systems intentionally simply do not to follow the law.

Basically, Oregon's current nurse staffing law could have been successful, but hospitals refused to follow the rules and the OHA has not enforced the laws. With no strong enforcement measures, weak oversight, and hospitals that feel they don't have to follow the rules, nurses are facing a staffing crisis unlike anything they have ever experienced before.

We must do something, and nurses are calling on you to address Oregon's nurse staffing crisis head on by passing HB 2697.

Changes need to be made to the current staffing law to hold hospitals accountable for ensuring patient safety as well as to address the staffing crisis.

HB 2697 does that.

Thank you for considering this important bill.

Terri Kaiser