

To the committee members of the House Committee on Behavioral Health and Health Care,

Nurses in Oregon have tried over the years, to hold hospitals accountable to providing safe patient care through the means we have such as staffing committees, grievances and good faith bargaining.

Unfortunately, these methods have come up short and Providence Milwaukie, where I work as a nurse, is currently attempting to implement a staffing model from Texas that INCREASES patient to nurse ratios. The talking point from our administrators is that our current, already stretched thin model is unsustainable. After years of struggling through a pandemic with an ever-increasing number of sick Oregonians requiring hospital care, Providence Milwaukie is focusing on a model that would REDUCE the number of nurses at the bedside caring for patients, rather than implementing changes that would recruit and retain nurses and stop the tide of early retirement that is driven by burnout and unsafe staffing. Additionally, new nurses entering the profession are shocked and overwhelmed, causing them to rethink their decision to become a nurse, and statistics show that many are leaving after only two years. This is why, more than ever, nurses support House Bill 2697.

Our hospitals are overwhelmed with patients, and our current staffing model is already inadequate to care for them. Dozens of patients board in our emergency departments waiting for a bed, care is greatly delayed, patients wait hours in our emergency rooms, decompensating and often only receiving care when it's too late. Everything from medication administration to incontinence care to rapid responses for critical patients is already delayed. Reducing the number of nurses at the bedside will lead to even worse patient outcomes, readmissions, and more nurses leaving the bedside since they feel so bad about struggling to do the bare minimum for patients as it is.

Nurses will continue to fight for patient safety, so without clear progress on safe staffing standards, Oregon could see large, multi-hospital strikes this summer. Numerical safe staffing standards will improve working conditions for nurses and keep hospitals safe for our communities.

Thank you for considering this critical legislation.

Sincerely,

Paraskevou Elia, RN

Providence Milwaukie Hospital