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February 26, 2023

Testimony in Support of HB 2697

To the House Committee on Behavioral Health and Health Care,

My name is Crystal Shutt Garcia and I am a physical therapist assistant at Providence Home and Community Care in the Portland region.

The last three years of being a healthcare provider have been extremely challenging. Myself and my colleagues have had to dig deep, physically and mentally, to make sure that the communities we serve did not suffer in the care they received. Meanwhile, management at hospitals across Oregon have shared dozens of messages praising nurses and healthcare workers as "heroes," while, at the same time, ignoring our repeated pleas for assistance. Our pleas to help us help our communities. Our communities that continue to be impacted by the ongoing effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. To be frank, we don't care about being called heroes; we want help.

We need more staff.

Safe staffing ratios are directly correlated with less medical errors. Would you want your loved one to be cared for by a nurse that was being stretched thin? Or waiting weeks to be admitted into home and community services after a long stay in the hospital? We're human and it's easy to miss the little things when we've got a lot on our plate. Little things add up to big things QUICKLY with our critically ill patients. With our patients that are becoming more medically fragile the longer they wait for quality care.

Being one of the most profitable critical access hospitals in Oregon, my hospital should be putting our patients before profits. It's the moral and humane thing to do. Our community deserves better. Oregon's nurses deserve better, and our patients deserve more staff.

Please support HB 2697 and give healthcare workers what they really need: help.

We all know that Oregon had a staffing shortage long before the pandemic. Yes, the COVID 19 pandemic has made already existing staffing issues worse, and Oregon is now facing a full-blown crisis as countless overworked and undervalued healthcare workers leave the bedside in search of safer working conditions, better pay, or simply leaving their profession entirely. I know I am personally looking to leave. After over a decade in healthcare, I am burned out watching companies profit while our patients suffer.

HB 2697 seeks to address many of the root causes of this crisis including requiring minimum safe nurse staffing and enforcement of legally required rest and meal breaks. The problem in Oregon is not that we don't have enough nurses. The problem is we don't have

enough nurses who are willing to work in these conditions. Please, help nurses and our patients by passing HB 2697.

Sincerely yours,

Crystal Shutt Garcia, PTA