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Testimony in Support of HB 2697

To the House Committee on Behavioral Health and Health Care,

My name is Tyler Griswold, and I am here today on the behalf of Oregon nurses and the ONA. I'm a Registered Nurse whose worked at OHSU since January 2020. I started my career in Adult Neurosurgery, and switched to Pediatric Oncology in February 2022. While these specialties are vastly different, they both have a consistent problem: the inability to safely take meal and rest breaks.

Through the COVID pandemic, I've seen our patients become much more complex, with extensive comorbidities requiring time-intensive nursing care. Our work load has increased, while our staffing has decreased, stretching our nurses more than ever before. If on the off chance I do find the time between tasks to take a break, I'm still at the beck and call of my patients.

When I worked in Neurosurgery, I had high fall risk patients who required assistance or supervision for mobilization at all times. They were frequently confused and would exit their bed alone without warning, signaling an alarm and necessitating an immediate intervention to maintain their safety. I would have to leave whatever I was doing to sprint to their room, hoping to arrive quickly enough to intervene before they fell. This would happen multiple times, nearly every time I attempted to take a 'break.'

When I am unable to take a break, my mind becomes cluttered, making it much more difficult to juggle all the competing tasks for my patients. A break is time for me to preform my own basic activities of daily life: eating, drinking, toileting, the tasks which we must timely complete for our patients to maintain their basic comfort and needs. How can we continue to uphold basic standards of care for our patients when we are unable to complete these for ourselves? We have no standard to ensure our nurses can safely take breaks, which puts our patients and our workforce at risk.

We must protect and retain the nursing workforce we have left, so I urge you to vote in support of HB 2697. We need to hold institutions responsible to provide us with these basic staffing protections, allowing us to continue to bear the anxieties and stressors of nursing.

Thank you for your time,
Tyler Griswold