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On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Behavioral Health and Health Care

Measure: HB2697

I am a transplant coordinator for a large academic hospital in Portland, Oregon. Prior to doing this, I was a nurse on an oncology unit in the hospital for quite a long time. I love being a nurse. It has given me a sense of greater purpose. It has given me a reason to challenge myself with both continuing education and also personal growth to become a better human being. I love seeing my patients thrive and feel cared for and it is an honor to be with them in their most vulnerable moments. This profession is central to my identity and it has been one of the most meaningful aspects of my life.

The pandemic has been a difficult time for all of us. At first we were community heroes and people would bang pots and pans for us as we recycled our PPE for days, storing it in a paper sack between uses. We showed up each day to give our best efforts. Now though, it almost seems that our best efforts have been exploited by the very system that is supposed to protect us. The system that is responsible for providing safe working conditions and health and care. Our best efforts during a crisis have become the perpetual state of our working conditions. Our broken healthcare ecosystem has caused devastation among nurses, much in the same way that the natural environment is collapsing because of exploitation of resources. The tragedy here is that, over and over, our species has constructed the very system that then destroys us. This is a system built on greed. Designed to extract as much labor out of a person as possible for as little cost as possible to those in power. How did we get here in healthcare? I believe we can do better than this. For ourselves, for our colleagues, for our patients, for our species and for our planet. A thriving system does not operate in this manner. It cannot operate this way with any hope of long term survival. It has been proven again and again that this path leads to inevitable collapse.

A path forward out of this is one where we mutually care for one another. It used to be assumed that in a forest ecosystem, different species were just competing for resources: light, water, carbon dioxide. But we know now that this is not true. There is a vast underground mycorrhizal web that an entire forest uses to communicate, share resources and nurture itself. A system in balance is where all interdependent species work together and thrive. For nurses, this means that we are able to take care of our mental, physical and spiritual selves. This means that we can rejuvenate and recover between shifts. That we have emotional support when tragic things happen at work so that we can remain whole. That we are safe from preventable harm to our bodies. That we have the staffing to care for each patient in the way that meets the patient's needs. That we have the time and resources to provide best practice nursing. This

means that we are not forced to choose between cutting corners or sacrificing our wellbeing. And that we are no longer viewed as an extracted resource in a system driven by the financial bottom line. We have to do better than this. We need to partner together and do the hard work of changing this path that we have found ourselves on so that we can survive and make a new story for ourselves.