

Submitter: lace velk

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Behavioral Health and Health Care

Measure: HB2697

2/28/2023

Thank you chair Noss, Vice-Charis, and committee members for hearing my testimony in support of HB 2697. My name is Lace Velk and I have been a nurse for 11-years. I hold various leadership roles within my organization and within our state. Currently I am a member of my hospital-wide staffing committee, and I serve on our state's Nurse Staffing Advisory Board (NSAB).

This bill will require the nurse staffing law, finally, to be enforced, which is critical since the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) reported that 30 of 31 hospitals have repeated violations of the nurse staffing law in their most recent combined revisits (1). Also 78% have received citations for violations of meals and rest breaks (2).

Hospital systems for decades have kept lean staffing models and when these lean models get stretched, the tension has nowhere else to go but to the patients, or it breaks a staff member, and then they leave. I want to be very clear: Understaffing is the top reason that my coworkers leave the bedside. Direct care nurse solutions to staff retention are overlooked and obstructed. Understaffing is fiscally irresponsible yet remains the status quo.

I bear emotional scars from advocating for a healthier work environment and from the sheer number of nurses I have congratulated for choosing to leave nursing because their work environments are unsustainable and dangerous for their physical and mental health. Direct care nurses have struggled to find their voices in the landscape of harshly imbalanced tables with little actionable protections or consequences.

Hospitals are adaptive resilient systems capable of innovative solutions. On any given day these resilient systems solve seemingly insurmountable problems. Unless the system is the problem. The only way to fix the system is to center the voices of those who provide direct patient care.

HB2697 is a necessity to take this law from deFacto to functional, with meaningful enforcement and clear numerical standards.

Thank you, committee members, for hearing my testimony.

References

1. OHA (2023) Nurse Staffing Advisory Board – Quarterly Meeting Agenda,

January 25, 2023, Nurse Staffing Revisits At a Glance slide 1 of 3, packet page 40.
NSABPacketJanuary2023.pdf (oregon.gov). Taken 2/23/2023

2. OHA (2022) 2022 legislative report. page 14. OHA 4341 Nurse Staffing
Advisory Board 2022 Legislative Report (oregon.gov). Taken 2/23/2023