

Julie Smith
17315 S Bradley Rd
Oregon City, OR 97045

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Testimony in Support of HB 2699

Dear House Behavioral Health and Health Care committee members:

I've been a nurse for over 17 years, working within the Providence health system. The situation that is happening at the hospitals now is unbelievable. All the floors are full of patients, and there are 10 to 20 patients in the emergency department boarding every night. These patients are there for up to 36 hours or more.

We rarely have enough nurses to cover the need we have currently.

I feel so bad for the patients stuck in the emergency room for so long, and there must be a way to stop this from happening in the future. In fact, Oregon's current staffing law, if enforced, should be that mechanism. Reports of unsafe assignments are increasing dramatically, and staffing levels are at the root of those reports.

Oregon law requires that each hospital has a method in place to document instances of unsafe staffing, and most facilities utilize the Oregon Nurses Association's (ONA) Staffing Request and Documentation Form (SRDF.) In addition to the facility's Nurse Staffing Committee, these SRDFs are sent to ONA for data tracking. These reports show a sharp increase both in the number of submissions and in the severity of impact on the patient population. As instances of unsafe staffing increase, so do the number of SRDFs that are submitted. In 2018, 1,598 SRDFs were filed with ONA. That number increased by 30% in 2019 to just over 2,000 SRDFs.

In 2021, more than 3,500 SRDFs were submitted to ONA - an 80% increase - showing numerous instances of delayed or omitted care.

While there is no way to know exactly how many of these instances led to patient harm, we do know that they contributed to a lower level of care than nurses are committed to providing, and that the public expects. HB 2967 will dramatically improve conditions in our hospitals, and I urge you to support it.

Thank you for considering this important bill.

Julie Smith