



Oregon Center for
NURSING

Testimony to House Committee on Behavioral Health and Healthcare

Jana R. Bitton, MPA

Executive Director | Oregon Center for Nursing
503-347-4047 | jana.bitton@oregoncenterfornursing.org

February 28, 2023

Testimony on HB-2697

HB-2697 (Nosse, Manning, Nelson, Patterson, Campos) requires hospitals to establish technical and service staff staffing committees, in addition to the existing nurse staffing committee, and establish minimum staffing standards for direct care registered nurses. The bill would also require home health agencies to establish a home health nurse staffing committee.

The Future of Oregon's Nursing Workforce: Analysis and Recommendation report conducted by the University of California at San Francisco (UCSF) and the Oregon Center for Nursing (OCN) reported on research showing the impact of staffing ratios and the relationship between nurse-to-patient ratios and patient outcomes.

Multiple literature reviews indicate positive relationships between registered nurse staffing and patient outcomes. Across care settings, higher nurse-to-patient ratios are associated with better patient outcomes. Patients on units that have periods of understaffing have higher risk of negative outcomes.

However, no study points to a single "optimal" staffing model. These studies have shown there are diminishing returns to increased nurse staffing, and some studies suggest adding more nurses may be detrimental at some point.

Data from The American Hospital Association Annual Survey of Hospitals indicates that average registered nurse staffing is higher in Oregon than in other state. While these data indicate that nurse staffing in Oregon hospitals is higher than the national average, nurses nonetheless attribute a great deal of their stress and burnout to heavy workloads.

The Future of Oregon's Nursing Workforce report emphasized that nursing workload continues to be an issue, given the shortage of available nursing to staff to fill open positions. In addition, the shortage is not confined only to registered nurses, as in some parts of Oregon there is acute shortage of nursing assistants. While the report recommends policymakers explore establishing fixed minimum staffing requirements, but should consider both the benefits and drawbacks. Any new staffing regulations should consider healthcare staffing holistically, as nurses' ability to practice to the highest level of their knowledge and skill depends on having adequate support and collaborative staff.