



Legacy Health
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February 28, 2023

House Committee on Behavioral Health and Health Care
Oregon State Legislature

Re: HB 2697

Chair Nosse, vice chairs Goodwin and Nelson, and members of the committee:

My name is June Gower. I serve as the chief nursing officer at Legacy Health's Unity Center for Behavioral Health. I am a registered nurse with over 20 years working in patient care, and a PhD in public health administration.

I appreciate the opportunity to testify virtually this evening as I live in Hood River as was not able to travel to Salem.

I testify tonight in opposition to House Bill 2697.

The need for Behavioral Health services has increased by 30% over the past 2 years, accounting for people who were never diagnosed, those with minimal coping strategies, and people seeking a safe emotional place to gain insight into their personal struggles. As a Behavioral Health inpatient facility, with the state's only licensed psychiatric emergency service, Unity cares for people from all parts of the state.

One thing that makes providing care in a Behavioral Health setting unique is that our patients all present in an acute or crisis state versus patients with a wide range of medical presentation in an acute care medical hospital.

Mandated nursing ratios will eliminate the nursing professional's ability to make a sound clinical judgement on individual patient acuity and crisis needs in keeping with their education and training. Additionally, mandated ratios won't improve patient care in a Behavioral Health inpatient facility where we use a team approach to treat the patient that includes Providers, Nurses, Social Workers, Therapist, Care Management, and technicians.

And, last summer our staffing shortages were so severe we were forced to cap our beds.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my perspective as a seasoned professional nurse.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "June Gower".

June Gower, Ph.D., CCNS, LNC, RN
Vice President and Chief Nursing Officer
Unity Center for Behavioral Health