



## STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF HB 2697

**To: Chair Nosse, House Behavioral Health and Health Care Committee**  
**From: United Food and Commercial Workers Local 555**  
**2/27/23**

Dear Chair Nosse, Vice Chairs Nelson and Goodwin, and members of the committee:

We thank you for the opportunity to share our support of HB 2697, which addresses the staffing crisis Oregon's health care workers currently face.

UFCW Local 555 is the largest private sector labor union in Oregon. Our members come from a number of industries, including healthcare. We are a diverse group of workers who take pride in acting as a strong collective voice for working people.

We stand with our labor allies, our members, and Oregon's health care workers in urging your support for House Bill 2697.

We must be responsive to the current health care workforce crisis, support overloaded health care workers, and improve patient safety and care in our community. Our hospital workers have endured tremendous difficulties as frontline workers during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, and continue to face challenges due to burnout and staffing shortages. It is clear that our workers need more support on the job, and a clear path to invest in and retain the workforce is needed.

HB 2697 is an appropriately robust response to a scary situation in acute care in Oregon. Specifically, the bill will:

- For hospital nursing staff, establish numerical standards of how many patients a nurse may be charged with caring for — the standard serving as a floor
- Resolve nurses' impossible decision between providing patient care and taking quick breaks for eating and resting during their 12-hour shifts
- Bolster the role of the Oregon Health Authority in ensuring the staffing standards are met
- Enshrine a voice for workers who do home health care or who are technical, service, or professional staff in a hospital to collaboratively set staffing standards, additional to the requirements of the bill for hospital nursing care

UFCW 555's members will be directly impacted by the creation of staffing standards for technical staff. We strongly believe that giving our members a seat at the table and the opportunity to set a

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staffing plan that reflects their needs is crucial to solving the staffing issues Oregon's hospitals currently face.

But our members do not work alone— they rely on every member of their care team to provide quality care to patients. We know the stories of nurses who are strained and demoralized by an inability to respond to patient needs in a timely manner due to short staffing. And study after study shows that understaffing is associated with longer lengths of stay, higher mortality, higher infection, and readmission. We are supportive of the additional measures taken in this bill to ensure and retain an excellent care team.

Establishing nurse-to-patient standards as well as a voice to determine staffing for categories of staff beyond hospital nursing is the solution to our lack of health workers that the workers themselves demand. We must do all we can to recognize and support Oregon's essential health care workforce— not only because they care for our communities, but because every worker deserves to be treated with respect.

HB 2697 addresses these concerns and puts a strategy in place that centers health care workers' experiences. Please join community members, advocates, and workers in supporting HB 2697.

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