

TO: Chair Nosse, Vice Chairs Goodwin and Nelson, Members of the House Committee On Behavioral Health and Health Care

RE: Support of HB 2697 and Safe Hospital Staffing

February 28, 2023

Hello, my name is Jaime Rodriguez. I am the elected President of American Federation of Teachers (AFT) Oregon. I am submitting this testimony in support of HB 2697 in support and solidarity with healthcare workers of Oregon and our communities.

The American Federation of Teachers does not only represent and advocate for education workers. Nationally as well as in Oregon, we have nurses, technical, and professional healthcare workers among our ranks. The state federation affiliate AFT-Oregon strongly encourages your support of HB 2697 to be responsive to the ongoing healthcare workforce crisis, to uplift overloaded healthcare workers, and improve patient safety and care in our community.

In the pandemic, we have learned how workforce shortages in education adversely impact student outcomes, student safety, staff retention, and staff safety. Our members know this far too well. It is the same in healthcare. Workers cannot be retained unless fair, reasonable, and well staffed conditions exist. It is a vicious cycle and it requires an intervention in order to break the cycle. We advocate in education for clear pathways for employers to invest and retain education workforces - whether they are union or not. We support the same in healthcare, urging Oregon to play a role to ensure a safe healthcare and hospital system.

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

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. So that these jobs are sustainable and so that more workers are retained rather than flee the care setting, health care system workers and professionals have put forth for the legislature's consideration these measures in HB 2697. Please join community members, advocates, and workers in support.

Sincerely,



Jaime Rodriguez, AFT-Oregon President