



February 28, 2023

Chair Nosse, Vice Chairs Goodwin and Nelson,

My name is Alicia Houlihan and I am a Certified Nursing Assistant at Peace Health Sacred Heart Medical Center in Eugene, Oregon. I did not start out wanting to work in health care, in fact I was pursuing business management opportunities until I was in a very serious traffic accident. The care that I received from the workers in the hospital inspired me to do this work because it can be so fulfilling. In my 17 years working in hospitals, I have gone to work every day to help people get better but staffing issues are making it impossible to get that same fulfillment and provide the type of care that patients need.

I am here to support House Bill 2697 because as a non-voting member of our hospitals nurse staffing committee I also see how the current law needs to be updated to address the needs of more workers who provide important services to our patients. As CNAs we provide important services like helping patients use the restroom, cleaning and bathing, taking vitals and other support services that promote the health and wellbeing of patients in our care. CNAs in our facilities can often be responsible for anywhere from 12 to as many as 36 patients in a shift.

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If 2 CNAs are scheduled on a shift to care for a floor of 36 patients, but one is aggressive and needs one on one attention the other staff are left to fend for themselves. The result is that patients are not getting the care that they need. This can delay discharges, and discourage patients trying to get better or worse.

The physical toll on our staff is also extreme due to these staffing levels. I have had 4 back surgeries and am currently in a walking boot due to injuries on the job. Patients in my unit, the ICU average over 300 pounds and the required lifting and turning is often too much for one person to handle. Without adequate staffing injuries and missed work is quite common.

When we can't provide the type of care that patients need, delirium can set in and make it harder for our patients to meet the goal of getting discharged and healthy as soon as possible. It is heartbreaking to work in this environment that used to be so inspiring for me.

CNAs have recently improved our starting wages to \$20.85 in our most recent contract. This helps us be competitive with local nursing homes that have improved pay for nursing assistants, but the stress on a hospital CNA and unsafe staffing levels mean that these jobs are less attractive. CNAs in Oregon nursing homes have safe staffing levels set and their ability to provide care is greatly enhanced by these laws.

By passing this law you will be giving critical, front line workers like me a voice in staffing decisions in our hospital. As

the staff that deal with patients during some of their most vulnerable moments, our voice is critical to improving patient care. Even with today's law, we don't have a voice and when complaints are raised there is no accountability. This will be a great improvement for the patients that I work with every day and give workers entering the profession that same kind of fulfillment I found when I started.

Thank you.