



Chair Nosse, Vice-chairs Nelson, Goodwin, and members of the committee Behavioral Health and Health Care,

My name is Aaron. I have lived in Portland, Oregon for 9 years and worked at Oregon Health and Science University for 9 years.

I am a certified neurophysiological intraoperative monitoring technologist. Most people have not heard of that as there are only 3,000 certified techs currently in practice worldwide. My job is to make sure that the nervous system is intact during complex surgeries which consists mostly of spine surgeries and brain surgeries. The tests I perform during surgeries have prevented patients from being paralyzed, visually impaired, hearing impaired, lose sensation and even preserved their ability to speak & interpret language. That is just a portion of the list of things that can go wrong in a surgery that my team and I help prevent on a daily basis. It is easy to see why these techs are in high demand.

Level 1 trauma centers across the United States require that an ortho-spine surgeon and neurosurgeon are on call to maintain that standing in acute care. And those surgeon's require someone like myself to be on call with them. There are shifts in the operating room that require us to monitor over 24 continuous hours without relief because of call and the lack of staff. Being actively engaged in patient care for greater than 24 hours or even 16 hours is not safe. As a member of the most recent bargaining team, I directly questioned OHSU about performing continuous patient care for 8 hours and a continuous 25 hours and if the same level of safety is maintained throughout. The result of bargaining over the issue was that the hospital would use "best efforts" but no minimum staffing standards or hospital penalties were established.

I monitor children, parents, brothers, sisters, and this result simply is not good enough. Not only do our patients deserve these staffing standards for their health and safety but our technical and service staff do as well. This bill would hold the hospitals accountable and make sure we're keeping our technical and service staff safe. We want to do our jobs safely.

Thank you for your considering and I urge you to vote yes HB 2697

Aaron Kawamotom
AFSCME Local 328