



March 8, 2023

To: House Committee on Behavioral Health and Health Care

From: Emerson Hamlin, Political Organizer, Oregon Nurses Association

Re: Support for HB 2543

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

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on behalf of the Oregon Nurses Association (ONA). ONA is a nurses union and professional association representing over 15,000 health care workers and providers, including registered nurses, advanced practice nurses, and allied health workers. Our members work in urban and rural hospitals, clinics, school-based health centers, home health, and county health departments across Oregon.

Our nurses consistently report being overwhelmed by the number of patients experiencing mental and behavioral health crises. This is true for our members who work specifically in mental and behavioral health care, in hospitals like Unity and OHSU, but it is also true for our nurses who do not hold such specializations, and who are working in emergency rooms and hospitals across our state. Our nurses do their best to serve all patients, but they consistently tell us that there is simply not enough support for patients who need mental and behavioral health care. Furthermore, it is unclear what the State of Oregon would need to do to ensure that everyone who needs care can receive it.

HB 2543 is a first step towards establishing adequate community mental and behavioral health resources. By routinely examining what fully funding community mental health programs would cost, legislators, advocates, and consumers of care would be able to better understand the depth of need across our state, and work towards meeting the level of need. ONA urges a yes vote on HB 2543. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Emerson Hamlin