

TRAVIS NELSON
STATE REPRESENTATIVE
HOUSE DISTRICT 44
NORTH/NORTHEAST PORTLAND



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Testimony in Support of House Bill 2921

March 13, 2023

Chair Holvey, Vice-Chairs Elmer and Sosa, and members of the committee,

I am Travis Nelson, State Representative for House District 44 (North and Northeast Portland). I am a Registered Nurse for nearly 20 years, with an involvement in organized labor for many of those years. Committee members, I am here today in support of House Bill 2921. This bill would provide a greater transparency into the gender and racial diversity of our hospital workforce through easier access to federally mandated reports. For those of you who do not know, the Equal Employment Opportunity report which is referred to as an EEO-1 is an annual report of demographics that is required by all private sector employers with 100 or more employees. The IPEDS is the version of this report for institutions of higher education.

After the murder of George Floyd and the resulting protests that swept the world, many companies, including hospitals in Oregon, released statements on their work to be more inclusive. Some of these companies and hospitals even stated that they were anti-racist organizations. However, when reviewing the EEO-1 reports provided by some of these hospitals, their “diversity” isn’t exactly in the executive suite or on the boards. It’s often in the entry levels of the organization – the cafeteria and cleaning staff and positions that do not require medical training.

Through my years as a union rep and negotiator, I have come to realize that an EEO-1 report is one of the best documents for showing the actual gender and racial diversity of a business. For those who may not be familiar, an EEO-1 report is a document where gender and racial workforce composition is laid out by job classification. I want to be very clear that this report does not reveal personal information about employees, such as their names, job titles, or contact information.

As you can see from this example EEO-1 report supplied by the federal government’s Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, *the only data* being reported out is the gender and race/ethnicity of the employees and what level of the organization they work within. That’s it. That is all we are asking for the hospitals to supply to BOLI. These reports are an easy way to determine where a company is hiring men, women, and people of color. In my experience, when hospitals finally provided their EEO-1 report, the numbers almost always told the same story – that the hospital may claim to be a diverse workplace, but most of the diversity is in the lowest level positions, not in the professional leadership positions. I believe that the leadership of a company should be reflective of their workforce and their community – diverse in race and gender.

That is why I have put forward this bill. It’s about data and transparency for employees and perspective employees. When I first moved to the Portland area, I was told by Black community members to not apply at OHSU because they didn’t hire Black people. When I told OHSU leadership about this, in a meeting in their OHSU board room last year, the information didn’t seem to come as a surprise to them. I know that OHSU is working to mitigate for the systemic racism in their workplace, and I salute them for the work they are doing. But fundamentally, I believe that sunlight is the best disinfectant in this case. The more readily we can shine a light on the makeup of our workforce, the better we can identify where there are gaps. The more that our hospital workforce resembles our communities, the more supported and “seen” patients will feel. For instance,

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I have heard over and over again stories such as Black women experiencing birth trauma because their concerns and fears were not addressed during labor by the Caucasian nurses and doctors attending them. And that's only in the labor and delivery unit. Expand that out to non-English-speaking family of ICU patients, parents in the NICU, and cultural considerations for terminal patients in the cancer unit. We need more medical providers of different race and ethnicity at all levels of care. From X-ray technicians and phlebotomists to midwives, nurses, and surgeons. We owe that to our patients and our community.

Since coming to this body over a year ago, I have repeatedly asked the largest hospital organizations in Oregon for their EEO-1 reports and I have received only *two* thus far. OHSU provided their IPEDS report and Kaiser provided their report with national numbers, and other hospitals just delayed or declined to respond. There is no legal mandate preventing these hospitals from sharing this data. I believe we may have a multitude of medical providers that identify as BIPOC and they are *choosing* not to apply to Oregon hospitals because of the makeup of the hospitals. When they do an internet search for the hospitals and their executive boards, this is what they see. Our healthcare facilities can do more to make sure that leadership looks more like community and I think they would agree.

Transparency into this report is not just crucial for employees and legislators, it will be a tool for hospitals to see how other numbers compare to theirs. This is a great way for our hospitals to lean on one another for ways to make changes to their organizations. I believe that there will be a net benefit from the data shared as a result of the passing of this legislation.

Furthermore, this is not an extra burden on hospitals and *not a new report* they need to compile and dedicate resources and energy toward. It is a report they already create; we are just requiring that they hand the information over to BOLI. Hospital systems such as Kaiser and Providence, who operate in California, are already sharing this information with the state, so this bill is nothing new to those organizations.

Hospitals receive millions of taxpayer dollars, and they are asking for more. They should provide more transparency about their workforce. And I'm happy to report that the hospital association as informed me that they will be testifying in support with an amendment we have agreed on that addresses some of their concerns. This amendment changes the deadline for submitting the report from June 30th of each year to 90 days after the due date for the federal government. It also decreases the fines and allows for an extension if they request it before the 90-day deadline. I specifically want to thank OHSU. They have engaged in robust dialogue around this topic and have assured me they are committed to a more diverse workplace.

I appreciate your considering this bill and urge you to pass this bill out of committee.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Travis Nelson".

State Representative Travis Nelson
House District 44, North/NE Portland