



March 21, 2023

Good Morning Co-Chairs Valderrama, Campos and members of the Joint Sub-Committee On Human Services,

For the record, my name is Lori Romike and I am a Mental Health Registered Nurse for the Oregon State Hospital and a member of the AFSCME union. I currently live in Lake Oswego, Oregon, having worked for the hospital since Oct 3rd 2011. I am writing in support for HB 5525 which allocates funding for the Oregon State Hospital to ensure we have safe staffing levels.

The work I do is important in that it provides me a 64-year-old single/divorced mother of 3 adult children and daughter of elderly parents who need my care, and time the financial ability to remain independent of assistance. Not only does this job provide the financial resources to be self-supporting without being a drain on the system. I am proud to work in an effort to assist those in my care who with stabilization, medication and proper resources in our communities may also be a success story in their own rights.

We as nurse's, and staff who work with the most acute mentally ill and at times dangerous patients need your continued support in covering short staffing needs while ensuring quality patient care. As you are aware much of Health-Care in Oregon and elsewhere has suffered an exodus of Nurses during and after the Covid crisis making it even more of a challenge to obtain, and retain nurses willing to continue as permanent staff at The Oregon State Hospital without extension to our differentials slotted to expire on March 31, 2023. Last week you heard directly from the Superintendent of the Hospital where they highlight how the LOA's we've been working under is a recruitment strategy to stay competitive. Please hear our voices in extending our differentials through June 30th 2023, of course a more long-term solution conversation would ideally benefit us to create a model for Oregon. Leading the nation in excellent quality of care for those we serve in Oregon starts with facing head on staffing crisis shortages we currently rely on travel nurses to fill those gaps. Due to the soon to expire differentials ending this month, please extend our requests for those of us nurses who stayed during the dark days of Covid and remain committed to our patients and fellow staff at the Oregon State Hospital.

I most sincerely urge you to take our testimonies into consideration when drafting a budget that meets the needs of our patients and staff who are committed to serving vulnerable Oregonians and while also having conversations with other stakeholders who have the authority to direct funding to the Oregon State Hospital .

Respectfully,

Lori Romike RN BSN