



03/23/2023

Good morning Co-chairs Valderrama, Campos and members of the Joint Subcommittee On Human Services,

For the record, my name is Sasha Yocom-Peckham and I am a Mental Health Registered Nurse. I live in Gresham, OR and have worked at OSH for over 7 years. The work I do is important as here at OSH we serve and underserved population, that is often misunderstood and stigmatized. Many people do not want to work in this field due to how dangerous it can be and how mentally taxing it can be. Being here to help patients with severe mental illness is why I chose to work at OSH, to let patient voices be heard and to have them live in an understanding, safe, validating place, while they are in the hospital. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today on the budget for the Oregon State Hospital. I support funding the Oregon State Hospital through HB 5525 but also want to share my own experience while working at the hospital.

At times this job can be very demanding, causing mass call-outs or people needing to take sick days. Staffing wise, this is a huge concern because this causes mandates and the need for more agency staff to work. Mandates are bad because people are unprepared and become extremely tired working more than their expected amount. We do the best we can to serve our population with the staff we have, but duties and activities can not always be completed because of the lack of staff. At times we only have enough staff to man the unit, and to take patients to work.

Working along side travel nurses has been, in some ways, difficult. Not because they are not qualified, but because they typically are unfamiliar with the area they are working in, do not have access to data bases that regular staff have, and they have less rapport with patients. Staffing stability at OSH is crucial to meet the needs of the patients receiving care and to continue to be in compliance with federal court order from Judge Mosman to admit and discharge Aid and Assist patients in a timely manner. The work is difficult and we need staff with experience to ensure that proper care is given.

This hospital is in needs to retain it's nurses. Many leave for agency jobs, or other positions because this job is stressful and dangerous. It is important that we pay our nurses well and give them more incentives to stay as retaining staff as it is so much easier than constantly having to train new nurses or train agency staff that only sign certain length contracts at a time. We support the intent of providing the Oregon State Hospital with monies to ensure it meets its mission but also ask that you direct OHA to ensure there are safe staffing levels and there is a long term solution for the staffing crisis.

*Sasha Yocom-Peckham, BSN, RN*