



March 28, 2023

Chair Grayber, Vice-chairs Lewis and Tran, and members of the Committee On Emergency Management, General Government, and Veterans,

My name is Dr. Matie Trewe, and I work as an attending psychiatrist at Oregon State Hospital in Junction City. I've worked here for over seven years, on a medium acuity unit the entire time. Being on the same unit over this time, I've seen the enormous changes in our patient population, our ability to prevent or respond to acts of aggression, and the decline in the variety and depth of services we offer. I am writing today in support of HB 2701 with the -3 amendmednt which includes OSH workers to a new category of PERS so that we can be compensated for the high risk and high stress work we engage in.

Every day I walk onto a unit with 24 patients, almost all of whom have committed a serious offense due to their mental illness, many of them violent offenses. In my job I often have to set limits with patients, inform them of consequences for egregious behavior, or initiate intrusive treatments such as involuntary medications. I have had patients threaten to assault or kill me more times than I can remember. I have had patients attempt to assault me on three occasions, only to be prevented by the quick response of our staff. I am considered fortunate in that I have not been assaulted, as many of my coworkers have. I worked this same job while pregnant with my youngest child, up to the day before she was born, and I owe a great deal to my unit staff and nurses for being even more protective of me during that period. My job requires working face to face with my patients, every day, often in confined spaces, often having difficult interactions with patients with severe symptoms of mental illness and violent behavior. I am not able to do my job remotely. As a physician, I am required to respond to situations where there is violence and seclusion or restraint is necessary, doing face-to-face evaluations of patients who may have assaulted someone moments before. I have evaluated and comforted staff members who were concussed, bleeding, missing teeth or hair.

As you are undoubtedly aware, there is a shortage of mental health practitioners at every level, from psychiatrists to technicians. I have seen dozens of dedicated, skilled clinicians leave employment at OSH because they didn't want to take the risk of being assaulted, or the certainty of seeing their coworkers assaulted. I have seen experienced clinicians sustain multiple concussions until they were forced to leave practice due to accumulated cognitive issues. OSH has work to do as far as how we manage violent behavior, however there will always be significant risk given our patient population. I urge you to support HB 2701 in recognition of the risk OSH employees take on every day. I believe it would also help with hiring, and assist with retaining experienced staff members.

Thank you for your attention, and I hope you will support HB 2701 with the -3 amendment.

Matie Trewe, MD