

Submitter: Randy Davis

On Behalf Of: SEIU 503

Committee: House Committee On Emergency Management, General Government, and Veterans

Measure: HB2701

To: House Committee on Emergency Management, General Government, and Veterans

From: Randy Davis

Date: March 30, 2023

RE: HB 2701 High Risk, High Stress

Dear Chair Grayber, Vice Chair Lewis, Vice Chair Thuy, and members of the committee,

Opening Statement

My name is Randy Davis and I am testifying in support HB 2701 High Risk, High Stress to retain and recruit workers at the Oregon State Hospital (OSH). I am a member of SEIU Local 503 here on my own time.

I have been working at OSH for over 25 years. I started as direct care line staff. My first full time regular position was in the now closed Children and Adolescent program. The program itself had just moved past some controversial issues and was making strides to move past these issues. I took this position after working two years through a Nursing agency. Pay was better and hours more flexible. The longer I worked in the program the more I realized that I wanted to be a permanent part of the team that was doing really good work with kids. This was 1997 right after the first changes of PERS was put into place.

Since then I have worked in almost every area in OSH. Over the years I have watched my co-workers take a physical and psychological beating. Working at OSH has been some of the most rewarding work I have ever done in my life and definitely the hardest emotionally and psychologically. I have seen many of my friends retire from OSH only to live a short time after retiring due to the physical and psychological stress from working more than 30 years and giving their all to OSH.

This bill will not impact me as I am close to retirement. My desire to testify today is to ensure the next generation of people who work at OSH will not become a statistic after they retire and will be able to enjoy their golden years in good health and with longevity.

I am hopeful that committee will see fit to pass this bill and ensure that the future workers at OSH have the best possible life after working in one of the most rewarding and yet stressful careers anyone can ever work in.

Unfortunately, despite the investments the Legislature has made in mental and behavioral health services and workforce, more needs to be done. The underfunding of services and critical staffing needs not only impacts the workforce but the quality of care for patients, further exacerbating the mental health crisis in Oregon. This leads to workplace injuries and illnesses for state hospital workers. OSH currently has the highest incidence of occupational injuries and illnesses of any industry in Oregon, making it the most stressful workplace in the state. We need the Legislature to support the workers at OSH so we can continue to do our jobs: serving patients.

Closing Statement

OSH workers deserve improved retirement benefits that recognize the dignity and value of their years of service. These benefits are vital for the well-being of OSH workers who must often retire early due to the immense physical, emotional, and mental toll of their jobs.

For too long, OSH workers have been an unrecognized and undervalued part of Oregon's healthcare system. Adequate staffing and secure retirement benefits would begin to provide the minimum recognition of their work.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Randy Davis

SEIU 503 member and proud employee of the Oregon State Hospital.