



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

From: Corrie Gordon, LCSW, Psychiatric Social Worker - Covering BG2

Date: 2/6/2024

RE: HB 4045 Public Safety Workforce Stabilization Act of 2024

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

My name is Corrie Gordon, and I am writing in support of HB 4045 Public Safety Workforce Stabilization to retain and recruit workers at the Oregon State Hospital (OSH) and 911 telecommunicators.

I am a resident of House District 21/Senate District 11, and as a psychiatric social worker I believe that OSH should get the Public Safety Workforce Stabilization benefit.

I have been asked as a social worker to cover units that I do not work on putting me in vulnerable position. I have been a victim of patient abuse on several occasions and had to continue to work with the patient even though I was being verbally attacked. I continued to work on a patient after he spit in my face and requiring the hepatitis series. I work individually with patients. I take patients off campus sometimes by myself. Walking into OSH and having to badge through every door that you come to does something to a person. I find that I look for a badge reader when I get into an elevator in a public facility. I also have realized that I never have my back out in the open. These are behaviors that just do not go away after we retire. I know my small story does not impact everybody, but it is the institution as a whole that has a story. There is not a single day that goes by that there is not an emergency code incident, and you worry about who is next.

Unfortunately, despite the investments the Oregon Legislature has made in mental and behavioral health services, more needs to be done. The underfunding of services and critical staffing needs impacts the safety of the workforce and the quality of care for patients. This leads to workplace injuries and illnesses for state hospital workers, making the state's psychiatric institute the most dangerous place to work.

OSH workers on the secure campus, like me, deserve improved retirement benefits that recognize the dignity and value of our 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.

I ask members of the committee to fully support HB 4045. This bill will immensely help the state's psychiatric and nursing workforce in the secure psychiatric facility. We need the Legislature to support the workers at OSH so we can continue to do our jobs: serving patients.

Signature

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Corrie Gordon

LCSW, Psychiatric Social Worker