



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

From: David Applebaum

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 David Applebaum 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 #20 Senate District #10. I began my career at [OHA] as a Custodian. My job today entails working directly with patients and sometimes alone. cleaning up their body fluids, cleaning all areas of the hospital including patients' rooms, trash, recycling, de-escalating patients in order to get my job done. Within the secure perimeter of the campus, on any given day, I work with around 40-50 patients.

I found myself in a situation when a patient launched an attack with a broomstick, leaving my cart in shambles. The only thing that prevented further harm was the cart blocking a crucial doorway. Every day, I navigate through a myriad of challenging tasks, from handling bodily fluids to cleaning up after incidents involving all bodily fluids.

Unfortunately, our department lacks adequate protection, and with staff already stretched thin, we often find ourselves in compromising situations. We do not have adequate training to protect ourselves in dangerous situations. Patient contact is a daily reality for us, yet it's often overlooked. During the pandemic, while our exposure remained high due to our direct interactions with bodily fluids, we were denied incentives, deemed unworthy of recognition as "direct patient care" despite being at considerable risk.

Every day I work with patients in order to do my job and I've been followed, verbally abused and I feel I'm constantly vulnerable as they can be provoked without reason due to their mental state. My job is direct patient care and most of what I do, if not almost all of what I do is not even listed in my job description.

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.

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.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

David Applebaum