



February 6, 2024

Chair Grayber, Vice-Chairs Lewis and Tran, and members of the committee on emergency management, general government, and veterans,

My name is John Moylan, and I'm a registered nurse at Oregon State Hospital in Junction City. I've worked at the hospital for about six years and plan to work here for many more. Thank you for allowing me to share my story and hope you support this important policy, Public Safety Workforce Stabilization Act.

As a psychiatric floor nurse, one of the biggest obligations is to build rapport, trust, and leaning forward to connect with our clients so they can reach their greatest potential. But for our clients to feel empowered to work towards their goals, they need to feel safe – safety builds the foundation for the success of both the clients and the staff. One of the realities of where we work is that there is a level of violence or potential of violence that always exists. Staff have a duty to mitigate and manage those unsafe situations.

In 2022, according to the OSH Salem Staffing Plan review, aggressive events between patients and toward staff rose over 1000 events. There were over 1700 seclusion events that occurred during 2022 which are some of the most dangerous situations of our job. In 2021, OSH had the highest incidents of occupational injuries and illnesses of any industry in Oregon. Our clients face many challenges, such as psychosis, paranoia, past traumas, and maladaptive behaviors that can lead to violence.



My team members, clients, and I have experienced this violence. It is up close and personal. I have been assaulted many times and threatened more times than I can count. One of the biggest stressors in my life is coming back to work each week and hoping that no one got hurt. But what amazes me is how our staff show the mental fortitude not to punish, shun, or isolate the client who is committing violence but double down on caring. Even after watching traumatic events unfold or experiencing assault or harassment themselves, Staff re-engage stronger with the client to connect, to understand, and to create healing for that person in crisis.

Having that tenacity to always show up for our clients creates psychological and physical burdens on the staff. I struggle with anxiety and after 6 years, my wife has left OSH due to multiple physical assaults and psychological trauma. Due to the pandemic and a high-stress work environment, OSH remains in a staffing crisis to retain existing staff and recruit new team members.

HB 4045 would give OSH staff the much-needed support to validate and compensate for their high-stress and high-risk occupation while recruiting new members to our organization. Mental health is a priority to protect our communities. Investing and prioritizing mental health professionals will have a positive ripple effect on Oregon's mental health crisis. Please support HB 4045 to provide what has been earned by OSH staff and to support the future of mental health in Oregon.

Thank you,

John Moylan