



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

For the record my name is Lori Romike, and I work as a Mental Health Registered Nurse at The Oregon State Hospital. I've worked here for 11+ years. I chose this occupation to help those in need and the most vulnerable population which is to serve those who suffer from Mental Illness. As most who choose to be in Nursing I have my own story of why I chose this field. I entered into nursing later in life, my example as a daughter of a former City of Portland policeman and later a Chief of Police in St. Helens, OR was to take this challenge on helping and working with some of our most challenging individuals with respect, dignity and professionalism. I am writing this in support of HB 4045.

Especially since the pandemic we have lost many staff and nurses at the hospital due to stress, imminent risk of harm/assault and burnout daily. So, it is even more vital to retain nurses who have the skills and abilities to work with our population. My work week consists of four ten-hour shifts starting at 22:00-08:00, at times we are short-staffed and are mandated to remain in place for an additional six hours after our shift.

Upon entering my shift, I never know what I might be walking into, but it's always a chance of patients who have assaulted staff or each other, patients who verbally and physically threaten 24/7 to kill me or hurt me to leave the building. These are typical and daily occurrences at my job which raises the stress level immensely with myself as lead over twenty-four beds and at times only two staff to assist me in managing our unit. This daily risk leads me to experience anxiety and stress way before I work. I was unable to sleep on my first day back to work since the pandemic in 2020.

The long term effects from the Pandemic has taken a professional and personal toll on me, my colleagues and my family. This constant demand of nurses such as myself who continue to show up for work is burnout, fatigue, more call outs, less ability to rebound and take part of healthy activities outside of work and for me less time with family (my 3 adult children, and my 2 elderly parents who need my care). To merely go to work already burned out and worried about physical injury to myself or crew, and return to home to sleep and recovery ineffectively without joy is sad indeed.

How do we recruit new nurses entering the workforce into such a dangerous and hostile environment? Not successfully if we choose to be transparent with the risks involved at working for The Oregon State Hospital. Passage of HB 4045 would allow myself, and others a positive incentive to assist in a better balance of personal/work life. This is incredibly helpful for us to stay longer, retain and recruit new nurses entering the field who are up to the challenge of this difficult patient population.

Thank you for allowing me to testify on this bill and I hope you vote yes on HB 4045.

Respectfully,

Lori Romike RN BSN