



Date: February 13, 2024

To: House Committee On Behavioral Health and Health Care

From: Vonda Abbe RN, Dayton, OR

Testimony in Support of HB 4089

Chair Nosse, Vice Chairs Goodwin and Nelson, and members of the committee,

My name is Vonda Abbe and I am here today on behalf of fellow nurses and the Oregon Nurses Association. ONA is in favor of HB 4089 because sub-minimum wages for on-call, or standby, nurses is an untenable situation which does not adequately respect how much burden is placed on an on-call worker.

I have worked in the post-anesthesia care unit in surgical services for over 20 years. Part of the job description is taking call during the off-hours of the operating room. This is added on to your FTE, so becomes extra hours. Call shift means that if during the night or weekends a surgery is urgent or emergent and can't wait, that team would be called in from home. I work in a small hospital and we do not have a night or weekend shift in surgery.

I live in rural Oregon and while on-call, it is expected that my response time to the hospital is 45 minutes. I have to leave home at a moment's notice. On standby I am paid 4.25 an hour. There is no differential at Christmas or Thanksgiving or other holidays. Traveling over holidays, as many workers are able to do, is impossible for nurses if scheduled for call.

And for some families, nurse pay is the primary or only income, but standby pay is considerably less than the cost of child care. So my coworkers often hire their child care solution in case they're called to work, but if they're not called, are left financially in a hole.

I have missed so much over my career — family things and social gatherings — to being on-call. Even though I am at home I might as well be at work.

On-call injustices hurt recruitment and retention in my department. Six nurses are responsible for covering the department every single day. Our call burden is higher, relatively, and nurses that we have considered for employment do not want the amount of call for the pay.

In addition to wanting to urge your support for HB 4089 for these reasons, I want to highlight the bill's gains for scheduling, for those nurses who are irregularly scheduled. The bill requires of hospitals a scheduling practice of 14-day notice times for employees, with exceptions for mutually-consented changes and emergencies. I know how valuable this is for nurses who are at the beck and call of the hospital, clearly, and, on top of that, scheduled late. This is another fix that Oregon's nurses need to be recruited and retained, to be treated with respect, and to have their time — and input in our health care system — valued.

Thank you for your time.