



A STRONG VOICE

FOR OREGON'S WORKERS

To: Chair Nosse, Vice-Chairs Javadi and Nelson, and Members of the House Committee on Behavioral Health and Health Care
FR: Tan Perkins, Oregon AFL-CIO
RE: Support HB 2203
Date: 03/18/2025

Chair Nosse, Vice-Chairs Javadi and Nelson, and Members of the House Committee on Behavioral Health and Health Care

My name is Tan Perkins with the Oregon AFL-CIO, we represent over 300,000 workers and their families, and strive to be a voice for all workers in the legislative process. The Oregon AFL-CIO is in strong support of HB 2203.

As a state we constantly talk about the addiction and mental health crisis facing us. But if we do not invest in our behavioral health workers we will never truly be able to make progress for those in need.

Behavioral health workers in Oregon deserve safe conditions, fair pay, and supportive training, so they can deliver the care our loved ones and neighbors need.

The majority of facilities are deeply understaffed, which results in dangerous situations for workers. There are countless stories of workers having to be alone with patients, working extremely long hours overnight with no relief, all of which results in situations that are not good for the worker or the patient.

HB 2203 makes necessary improvements to our Behavioral Health system by taking action on the recommendations of the Joint Task Force on Improving the Safety of Behavioral Health Workers:

Written Safety Plans and Protocols

Behavioral health employers, mobile crisis teams, and emergency shelters should be required to develop written safety plans.

Worker Rights, Reporting Options, and Trainings

Behavioral health employers should be required to provide safety training addressing certain topics, including the employer's safety plan, de-escalation techniques, as well as workers' rights and reporting options regarding safety concerns.



A STRONG VOICE

FOR OREGON'S WORKERS

Support for Employer Changes and Compliance

OHA should offer grants to employers to support risk assessments and to ensure work settings are safe. Any newly constructed behavioral health facilities receiving public funding should be required to include elements to enhance worker safety in its design. Oregon agencies should review agency rules for client and worker safety and develop related guidance for employers and increase coordination during enforcement of these regulations.

Staffing Requirements and Related Payments

Behavioral health employers should offer a communication device to any worker who may be alone with a client or allow the worker to request a second person be present during a patient visit.

We urge you to support HB 2203.