

Submitter: Amber Jenkins
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Health Care
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB4074

Written Testimony in Opposition to HB 4074

Chair Nosse, Vice Chairs Nelson and Diehl, and Members of the Committee:

For the record, my name is Amber Jenkins. I am a registered nurse and have worked as a registered nurse for four years. I currently work at Kaiser Westside Hospital in Hillsboro Oregon, and I am a member of the Oregon Federation of Nurses and Health Professionals (OFNHP AFT-5017). I am writing in strong opposition to HB 4074.

Every day, I provide direct patient care, and the nurse staffing law passed in 2023 has a real impact on my ability to do my job safely and effectively. HB 4074 would make significant changes to the enforcement of that law. If passed, I fear for the patient safety within our hospitals. When I started as a new grad nurse four years ago I was afraid to go to work. Often I would come to work and there would not be a charge nurse on the floor. At time we would be staffed above ratio. I had no support or resources and made mistakes. Mistakes that would not have happened if I had a charge nurse on the floor. Mistakes that could have led to patient harm. Thankful when the staffing law went into effect there was hope and change. The change is we have a break nurse and charge nurse on the floor. I have trained new graduate nurses and felt like they had the support to practice safe nursing knowing they have resources every shift. I work med surg in the night shift. I have been counting the days down to the 1:4 ratio to go into effect knowing that I will soon be able to provide better care for my patients. Five patients is too many. Often many patients will need telemetry monitoring, but Kaiser already found a way to get out of abiding the 1:4 ration for these patients. The patients on the floor are getting sicker and sicker. Need more care needs, frequent assessments and many orders to be completed. Now we also don't have a CNA for every patient. So now as the nurse I don't even have help with my patients. Often my patients require total care. We are required to have two people to use lift equipment but there isn't a second person to help me. Everyday we are at risk at work. The ratios matter. Without them healthcare will crumble and many of us will leave bedside nursing. Kaiser frequently offers staff the night off, they have the staff to cover the extra nurse needed. They have had three years to prepare. Three years I have been put at risk at work hoping that one day the staffing change will be here and my work will be safer. Greed of money is more important to organizations than safe care for patients and safe working conditions for healthcare works.

HB 2697 was the result of years of research, negotiation, and stakeholder engagement. Rushing through changes to the statute will only put providers and patients at risk. Advancing HB 4074 now would shortcut that process and risk unintended consequences that cannot be fully evaluated in the limited time available.

From my experience, the current law is working as intended, and barriers to passing plans are rooted in unwillingness to utilize escalation and acuity tools. Hospitals were given ample time to comply, and the vast majority have done so. Allowing the overturn of the staffing law will severely put those in the hospital at risk. There are not enough staff to provide safe care to patients. The staff will suffer mentally and physically and ultimately leave the profession. When you or your loved one need care in a time of sickness and fear, there won't be anyone there to provide safe care. It is scary to think what the hospital will look like if this goes through. And when another pandemic hits, who will be there?

Weakening enforcement through delayed penalties or reduced accountability would effectively suspend the law without the thoughtful analysis such changes demand. For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to oppose HB 4074 as currently written. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Amber Jenkins, BSN, RN

And here for ease