

Submitter: Karl Rusterholtz
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Health Care
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB4074

Dear Oregon legislators,

I am writing in strong opposition to HB 4074. This proposed bill will gut the advances the state has made toward protecting patients and staff in Oregon. The recent staffing law that took effect in June 2025 was critical in holding hospitals accountable for providing safe staffing throughout the hospital. Many of you may not realize the complexity of patient care in today's hospitals. We are not simply hand-holding. We are in the trenches saving lives, providing critical care, and administering potentially deadly medications. With each additional patient a nurse must care for, the risk for mistakes increases. As an oncology nurse, I administered chemo- and biotherapeutic medications sometimes costing in excess of \$100K for bag. If that administration was to one of your loved ones, or to you, I dare say you would want me to have the time to safely do so. As a psychiatric nurse, violence has become commonplace. In Oregon, it is now more dangerous to be an acute in-patient psychiatric nurse than it is to be a cop (Oregon Journalism Project). While the state recently passed SB 537 to address violence in the Workplace (VIW) in healthcare setting, the purpose of that bill cannot be fully realized while cutting staffing ratios. We need staff. And, in acute care, inpatient psychiatric settings, we are being permanently harmed by the violence we face. Ask Legacy Unity, Portland's go-to psychiatric facility, about its violence numbers. You will see that we regularly send staff to the ER with injuries sustained due to dysregulated patients. Within less than a year, a coworker of mine sustained an attack so bad, she will need reconstructive surgery. According to OSHA, of the significant contributors to workplace violence is understaffing. This is borne out in peer-reviewed literature. According to the European Journal of Public Health, violence against healthcare workers is a political problem and a public health issue (2022). A study published in Public Health (a peer-reviewed journal) revealed a high prevalence of workplace violence among healthcare workers (2023). There are also many studies into the impact of staffing ratios on patient safety. This is a numbers game. Healthcare workers are here to provide safe and appropriate care to everyone. Hospital administrations are about the dollars. Look at who is trying to gut staffing ratios and you will see where the problem lies. We need you to support healthcare workers and the patients for which they care. Please, DO NOT vote infavor of HB 4074.

Sincerely,

Karl Rusterholtz, RN, BSN, BS, MS.