

Feb. 12, 2026

Oregon State Legislature
House Committee on Health Care
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301
Submitted electronically via OLIS

RE: HB 4074, relating to hospital staffing

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

The Hospital Association of Oregon is a mission-driven nonprofit association representing Oregon's 60 community hospitals. We believe that all Oregonians should have excellent, dependable hospitals in their communities today, tomorrow, and for decades to come. We support HB 4074 to provide needed fixes to the hospital staffing law.

During the 2023 regular session, representatives of Oregon's hospitals and representatives of labor formed a coalition to negotiate and advocate for the passage of a package of legislation to support Oregon's health care workforce. One bill within that package was HB 2697, the hospital staffing law. The hospital association is proud of its work with the coalition during the 2023 session. The hospital staffing law was intended to give professional, technical, and service health care workers a stronger voice in the creation of staffing plans, establish enforceable statutory nurse-to-patient ratios with built in flexibility for nurse staffing committees, reduce administrative burden affecting hospitals, and build partnerships that we hoped would protect access to care for patients.

However, the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) has interpreted the law and its enforcement differently than expected in fundamental ways, creating a serious threat to jobs, services, and hospitals that our communities rely on. Implementation challenges continue as we collectively deal with confusion and misunderstandings that drive tensions between health care workers and hospitals and ultimately add to the cost of delivering hospital care.

Concerns regarding OHA's implementation of the hospital staffing law resulted in meaningful discussions with the House Speaker's Office and the Oregon Nurses Association during the 2025 regular session, and the passage of a targeted fix through HB 3294. As we noted at the time, the legislation was an important initial step, and more steps would be needed in the future. Those steps should include larger policy discussions with the broader 2023 coalition.

The passage of H.R. 1 has underscored the urgency of this work. H.R. 1 will have two devastating effects on the Oregon health care system: Increasing the number of people without health insurance and reducing federal funding the state relies on to support care for those on Medicaid. In a time of declining resources and increasing threats to our collective health care system, the state should focus limited public resources and policy choices on where they matter most—the bedside—and reduce administrative burden that does not support patient care.

Any significant legislation requires time for stakeholders to learn and to identify unintended consequences. OHA's implementation of the hospital staffing law, and its onerous complaint process, is one such consequence. It is now clear that the learning phase hospitals and staff were expecting prior to enforcement was not long enough, and OHA's complaint process is diverting significant staff time and resources from patient care. OHA has not communicated in a timely way about positions it will take that have major consequences on hospitals. Hospitals and their teams have learned about OHA's stances on crucial issues as OHA determines a violation has occurred, too late to avoid financial penalties. Our list of concerns remains long. Below is a sample:

OHA's delays: OHA has not been resolving complaints fast enough. The complaint timeline in the 2023 law was intended to speed up OHA's complaint process to prevent the languishing of complaints that occurred under the prior law. Unfortunately, OHA has taken the position that it can take any amount of time to determine that a complaint is valid, effectively delaying the start of the clock that measures timely investigations. Frontline staff who file complaints deserve an answer from OHA in a reasonable amount of time, and leaders who work to resolve issues deserve reasonable notice. If the focus is on safe staffing and patient care, OHA's delays result in too many investigations that occur far beyond a useful timeframe.

Statutory nurse-to-patient ratios: Hospitals have a long-standing disagreement with OHA on the role of statutory nurse-to-patient ratios. OHA interpreted the law in a way that hospitals did not expect, and OHA's interpretation does not work. The status quo is unsustainable.

HB 4074 takes critical steps to:

1. Return to the 2023 bill as the coalition originally intended;
2. Pause penalties to allow time for OHA to enforce the law the coalition intended; and



3. Make reasonable improvements to support all rural hospitals.

It is in all our interests to work together so that Oregonians can get the health care services that they need, health care workers can have stable, good paying jobs, and hospitals can continue serving as the economic anchors in our communities. We stand ready to work as we have in previous discussions in good faith, to preserve the intent of the 2023 law while creating an environment where hospitals can deliver the affordable, high-quality care that Oregonians expect.

Sincerely,



Sean Kolmer
Executive Vice President of External Affairs
Hospital Association of Oregon

About the Hospital Association of Oregon

Founded in 1934, the Hospital Association of Oregon (HAO) is a mission-driven, nonprofit trade association representing Oregon's 60 hospitals. Together, hospitals are the sixth largest private employer statewide, employing more than 70,000 employees. Committed to fostering a stronger, safer, more equitable Oregon where all people have access to the high-quality care they need, the hospital association supports Oregon's hospitals so they can support their communities; educates government officials and the public on the state's health landscape, and works collaboratively with policymakers, community based organizations and the health care community to build consensus on and advance health care policy benefiting the state's four million residents.

