

Submitter: Jessica Kutsche
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 Jessica Kutsche. I am a Registered Nurse (RN) and have worked as an RN for 16 years. I currently work at Kaiser Westside Medical Center in the Portland-Metro area, 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.

For the past 7 of my 13 years working in a Medical-Surgical unit, my primary position has been as a Charge Nurse. In my role of creating safe and balanced assignments each shift, I must carefully consider patient acuity, fall risk, admissions, discharges, and unexpected deterioration, all of which have grown more complex over the years. The difference between four and five patients is significant at the bedside, as each additional patient represents a full workload of assessments, medications, coordination of care, documentation, and potential emergencies. Increasing ratios narrows the margin for safety, heightens the risk of missed changes in condition and preventable complications, and contributes to nurse burnout and retention challenges. I respectfully urge you to reject this amendment and maintain the 1:4 medical-surgical staffing ratio to protect both patient safety and Oregon's nursing workforce.

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. Hospitals must be held accountable to the staffing standards established under HB 2697 and uphold the law as it was intended — to protect patients and frontline caregivers. Budgetary pressures should never be resolved by increasing nurse workloads at the expense of patient safety or by shifting financial strain onto the nursing profession. 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,
Jessica Kutsche
BSN, RN, CMSRN