

Patrick Hennessy, Chair, ONA Cabinet on Health Policy

Opposition to HB 4074

Good afternoon Chair Nosse, Vice-Chairs Diehl and Nelson, and Committee members. My name is Patrick Hennessy and I am speaking in strong opposition to House Bill 4074.

I'm an ICU nurse on a trauma-surgical unit in a large Portland hospital and I also chair the Cabinet on Health Policy at the Oregon Nurses Association. I'm saddened and pretty confused that we are here again having to explain why SAFE STAFFING SAVES LIVES.

ONA committed in good faith to an interim workgroup this past fall and anticipated working in coalition with hospitals to streamline agency enforcement and provide hospitals with flexible options to follow the law and avoid fines.

HB 4074 is a deliberate attempt to strip nurses of any real authority over staffing and allows hospitals to simply bypass staffing committees if nurses won't agree to unsafe plans. That is not collaboration — that is coercion.

Defaulting to minimum ratios when no plan is adopted is gross negligence. Ratios were negotiated as the bare minimum for safe patient care...not a replacement for the professional judgment of nurses who are actually doing the work. We need the flexibility to know when a patient needs one to one nursing care. In the ICU, one nurse taking care of two unstable, critically ill patients is dangerous. Trust me, I've been in those patient assignments and medications get delayed, lab values get missed, families are wondering why I'm not in the room, doctors are asking why I can't

help them with a procedure, and it's all because I can't be in two places at once.

This bill tells nurses like me to accept unsafe assignments regardless of acuity— and then when a patient suffers harm...we are held legally liable and we have to face those patients and their loved ones...not the hospital administrators who want to have you believe that there is a one-size fits all approach to nurse staffing.

HB 4074 guarantees more nurse turnover, worse care for patients, and more harm in our healthcare system. This committee should absolutely reject this bill without question.