March 19, 2019

Oregon State Legislature
House Committee on Health Care
900 Court St. NE
Salem Oregon 97301

Re: House Bill 2945 – nurse staffing

Chair Salinas and members of the House Committee on Health Care:

My name is Sarah Horn, RN, and I am the Chief Nursing Officer at Salem Health Hospitals & Clinics, a community health system primarily serving Marion and Polk counties. Facilities include a 494-bed acute care hospital located in Salem, a small rural hospital located in Dallas, Oregon, and primary care and specialty clinics. I am writing to communicate concerns about House Bill 2945.

Salem Health shares House Bill 2945's goals: safety for health care workers and better outcomes for patients. Salem Health is dedicated to improving the care our patients receive and creating a workplace where employees feel protected and confident. Many of our policies and processes support continuous improvement in these areas because we recognize there is always room to improve. We also believe that the people doing the work are the experts who should be empowered to solve challenges. This culture has led to a structure of shared professional decision-making and shared governance. However, House Bill 2945 does not serve these mutual goals.

The existing nurse staffing law has not created an effective process for improving patient care or employee safety. Before any changes to nurse staffing committees are considered, the existing law needs to be more clearly defined and more consistently applied. Unclear interpretations of rules and lagging responses to plans of corrections have resulted in frustration, rather than safer workplaces or better outcomes for patients.

House Bill 2945 prematurely expands the scope of nurse staffing committees and potentially creates additional dynamics, all while the underlying challenges in the system remain unaddressed. I urge the committee to not adopt House Bill 2945.

Sincerely,

Sarah Horn, MBA, BSN, RN, NE-BC, RNC-NIC
Chief Nursing Officer
Salem Health