



Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 567

March 3, 2021

Senate Committee on Health Care

Russell Lum

Good afternoon Chair Patterson, Vice Chair Knopp, and members of the committee. My name is Russell Lum and I am a political organizer for Oregon Nurses Association (ONA). We represent 15,000 nurses — including RNs and advanced practice nurses — and allied health workers. Oregon Nurses Association and the Nurse Practitioners of Oregon come before you today to say that SB 567 entails commonsense and needed protections. We urge your advancement of this amending of ORS 659A.142 towards becoming law for our state.

Nurses believe in providing care with sound diligence — as well as with compassion and respect, and with best available science and judgment — for each patient regardless of status. Further, Oregon Nurses Association both names *and* (with our partners, with intersecting issues, and with our deeply held values) attempts to correct structural injustices in health care. Racism, ableism, and other systemic mistreatment or exploitation need our hard work, and need more tools in the toolbox, to address.

There is an area where current state law falls short, to the detriment of those who need protection. To be clear, they needed it generations ago, and a commitment to health equity means fixing it now. Oregon statute should clearly state the impermissibility of denying treatment on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, or disability. Unfortunately, language that would have taken a strong step towards this, though introduced, did not make it into law in the passage of SB 1606 in 2020.

It is true that nurses are bound to provide care regardless of the realities of historical discrimination status that may come into play with a given patient. Oregon Administrative Rule 851-045-0070, under the State Board of Nursing, provides this.

Yet SB 567 makes the mandate to care for patients as they need it and without discrimination commendably stronger. SB 567 requires health professionals to follow courses of treatment under best information of likely benefit to that patient, with no room for the health professional to have relied on their unfair discrimination in making the assessment.

This approach will care for more Oregonians, with more compassion, effectiveness, and justice. It will do better by patient populations at greatest risk of neglect and violation of their rights. Thus, as an organization that places primary concern on being patient-first and advancing health equity, ONA strongly supports Senate Bill 567. Thank you for your consideration and shared values you have with Oregon nurses on these issues.