

Greetings Chair Prusak, Vice-Chairs Salinas and Hayden, and members of the committee.

My name is Erica Swartz, and I member of Oregon Nurses Association (ONA). Today I submit, to you, testimony in support of HB 3016 as one of ONA's 15,000 registered nurses, Nurse Practitioners of Oregon, and professional member affiliates throughout the state. I am honored to be one of those nurses and helping to represent our organization.

I support HB 3016. Our current COVID pandemic experience has illuminated an unforeseen flaw in the blanketed option for a health care facility to suspend the nurse staffing committee and its related staffing plans in times of emergency. Refinement is needed so that nurses are not completely disregarded once a better view of the problem can be achieved.

During this pandemic it became painfully clear that our nursing workforce needed to adopt less than optimal standards in order to assess, stabilize, and address the needs of our patients, colleagues, and employers. This short-term strategy left nurses, throughout the state, without an ability to inform contingency plans at time when nursing expertise was most desperately needed.

This statutory amendment maintains the collaborative, solution-based framework of our hospital nurse staffing committees. It allows them to address evolving conditions and maintain a cohesive work environment. It's a proactive approach to emergency preparedness that limits uncertainty and better prepares our health care system for future catastrophic events.

In my personal experience as a nurse at OHSU and a member of the staffing committee since 2017, in the last year I have seen the staffing committee ignored in favor of implementing staffing changes decided by upper administration. These were changes previously been voted down in the committee (prior to the pandemic) and the hospital is now using times of emergency to push through changes long desired, despite risks to nurse and patient safety.

In order to both preserve the collaborative process intended in the Oregon Nurse Staffing Law and demonstrate the utmost respect for the input of front line nursing staff, I support HB 3016. Please vote favorably to move the bill out of committee to support and protect us like we continue to support and protect the entire state.