

## **Testimony in Support of House Bill 3016**

February 24, 2021: House Committee on Health Care

Melinda Colon, RN

Good afternoon Chair Prusak, Vice Chairs Salinas and Hayden, and members of the committee. My name is Melinda Colón and I am a registered nurse on the a medical surgical unit at Good Samaritan Regional Medical Center in Corvallis. I'm writing in support of HB 3016. Having worked at Good Samaritan for 12 years now, I have never seen our staffing plan completely thrown out the window because of our "state of emergency". HB3016 can allow nurses and administration to collaboratively come together to create a plan during an emergency that can ensure the safety of both nurses and patients during unforeseen circumstances.

During emergency and disaster situations, our community needs to trust that our hospital is available to safely accommodate the needs of those who are needing to seek care. Early in 2020 when our governor announced that Oregon was in a state of emergency because of the COVID pandemic, staff were forced to quarantine for two weeks after any potential exposure, limiting the amount of staff available for patient care, and we were forced to take more patients than was safe to make up for the lack of planning. Before we had a single COVID patient in our county, this is what we had to do. Our administration had come together unilaterally to create policies that dictated how each unit was supposed to staff for the shift. Nurses had no say in this, and patients were effected.

As a result, we have had more falls with injuries, more staff with injuries, countless medication errors, and completely omitted patient care tasks. When our county had a surge of patients with COVID-like symptoms, we would have to treat them as if they were a COVID patient. This means one-on-one nursing, maybe two on one nursing. This means that a unit would require more nurses to accommodate the safe and high quality care of the surge of patients.

If there is ever a disaster or an emergency that comes up and administration feels the need to cancel staff planning meetings, just like with any emergency planning, staffing needs to take priority in that. I recognize the importance of emergency planning, and I absolutely believe that ensuring that there is enough staff to take care of loved ones, of community people, even of you is important to have trust in and an essential part of that process. Please consider HB 3016, and the impact it could have on you and your community during a time of need.

In order for nurses and hospital administration to be able to come together to collaborate on an effective and safe staffing plan, there has to be opportunities for OHA to enforce the staffing law should components of how our facility is failing to meet the needs of staffing on our different units is reported. HB 3011 is a great opportunity to help support OHA to grow and provide personnel to follow up with these breaches of the staffing law that are constantly reoccurring. Nurses need to be able to feel like they are being heard when staffing is violated, patients need to not know that there is a staffing violation based on the care that they are receiving due to lack of staffing, and administration needs to not Slack in collaborating with changes and they're growing comfort of lack of response. I want to also encourage you to support HB 3011 for your community.

Thank you for your time.