



Oregon Center for
N U R S I N G

Representative Rachel Prusak, Chair
Representative Cedric Hayden, Vice-Chair
Representative Andrea Salinas, Vice Chair
House Committee on Health Care

Monday, February 7, 2022

Informational Testimony on behalf of H.B. 4003

The past two years of the COVID-19 pandemic have been incredibly stressful for Oregon's nursing workforce. Each week, the Oregon Center for Nursing hosts a weekly Zoom call with nurses from around the state to get the pulse on how they are faring during the pandemic. This group includes nurses from a variety of care settings, employers, workforce investment partners, nursing students, and other stakeholders.

Our discussions have shifted somewhat over the course of back-to-back public health crises. However, the themes of our "Friday Huddle" align with the discussions of Rep. Rachel Prusak's Health Care Workforce Task Force, in which OCN participated. Currently, this is the state of Oregon's nursing workforce:

- Nurses are tired, exhausted, and burnt out. According to a recent [American Nurses Association survey](#), about 62 percent of US nurses are reporting symptoms related to burnout and stress
- Nurses at all levels are leaving their positions, and particularly at the bedside. Another [American Nurses Foundation survey](#) found 21 percent of nurses indicate they intend to leave their current job within the next six months, and another 29 percent indicated they may leave. [Work conducted by OCN](#) has shown Oregon nursing programs do not graduate enough nurses annually to meet our projected need, and Oregon must import labor from other states to meet the need.
- Travelers are filling staffing gaps, but this is an expensive stopgap, destroys morale, and is not sustainable. Nationwide, demand for travel nurses in 2021 has increased more than 280 percent from the same time last year, with more than 40,000 travel nurse positions available on any given day. [Patricia Pittman from the School of Public Health at George Washington University stated](#) many staff nurses are being driven away due to frustrations stemming from working conditions and staff shortages, along with pay disparities between staff and travel nurses.

- Clinical placements and training opportunities for students in metro areas have been disrupted due to staffing shortages and COVID-19 surges. Metro areas graduate the most students in the state. According to the Oregon State Board of Nursing, of the 1,237 nursing program graduates in 2020, 842 (68%) graduated from nursing programs located in metro areas.
- The challenges we are experiencing in the nursing workforce, accelerated by COVID, are not new problems. For many years, [OCN has documented](#) the challenges to growing Oregon's nursing workforce, including nurse faculty, clinical experiences for students, and maldistribution of the workforce both geographically and by work setting.

Oregon's health care system is held together by nurses. There is much work to do, and the solutions outlined in LC 271 can help reinforce our nursing workforce, and recognize nurses for the contribution they make in all practice settings.

For more information:

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