

February 7, 2022

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

**Re: House Bill 4003 – Solutions for Nurse Workforce Shortages**

Chair Prusak, Vice Chairs Salinas and Hayden and members of the committee:

On behalf of Oregon's 62 community hospitals, their employees, and the patients they serve, the Oregon Association of Hospitals and Health Systems (OAHHS) strongly supports HB 4003, addressing the nurse workforce shortages with short-term solutions.

The core mission of hospitals and health care systems is caring for people in their time of need, 24-hours per day/seven days a week/365 days a year. To fulfill that mission, hospitals and health systems need compassionate, skilled, trained, and dedicated professionals. Simply put, a hospital cannot stay open if it doesn't have adequate staff to take care of the patients that need care. Let's be clear as well, this is all the staff at every level at our respective facilities that make health care work.

Investments in our workforce are foundational in normal times and even more so in critical times, such as during a public health emergency.

Even before COVID, our workforce was being challenged with looming shortages due to retirements and a lack of nurse educators. Then came COVID, merging the looming shortages with a war against this virus that has damaged communities and provided no recovery time for these healthcare heroes over the last 2 years. Oregon is not alone; this is a national workforce crisis as the pandemic continues to rage across the world. These challenges will have a profound impact on our healthcare delivery system that will be felt beyond the current surge and will require innovation, collaboration, and partnership to get us through.

HB 4003 is a bill that reflects Oregon's ability to be a leader in healthcare, and we appreciate that it has clear and predictable steps to start to address the problem.

We specifically appreciate the effort to provide a bridge to quickly employing nonresident RNs in good standing in other states to work temporarily in Oregon hospitals that are experiencing a temporary nursing shortage not related to a labor dispute, as those nonresident nurses apply for their Oregon license. This bill will expand the current law to all areas of the hospital and now will apply it to behavioral health homes. We recommend that the temporary staffing expansion component of the legislation have an emergency clause making the bill effective upon passage to help ensure staff are available as facilities begin to move toward their recovery phase plans.

We also appreciate that HB 4003 includes a new nurse intern license. This will allow hospitals to compensate student nurses who are approved by the Oregon State Board of Nursing and meet other requirements established by the Board. Hospitals that will utilize nurse interns will be doing so as

an extension of an RN not in lieu of or replacing an RN. The goals of the bill include providing the nurse intern with paid hands-on experience within their scope and supporting registered nurses by adding individuals who can perform certain tasks based on their competencies and within their licensed scope. Hospitals will need to put nurse interns into their staffing plans as staffing plans require hospitals to describe who will be doing what. We would not want to prohibit using nurse interns in our matrices or staffing plans.

Hospitals are committed to identifying additional long-term opportunities for collaboration and innovation that may be applicable to not only the nursing field, but across our health system that provides essential services. Our system is already facing challenges, and we see more challenges ahead.

Hospitals support HB 4003 and appreciate the work that has gone into this legislation. We encourage you to move this bill forward in this session.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Andi Easton". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "A" and "E".

Andi Easton  
Vice President of Government Affairs  
Oregon Association of Hospitals and Health Systems