

Submitter: Kristen Swafford
On Behalf Of: self
Committee: Senate Committee On Labor and Business
Measure: SB1549

As a voter and registered nurse in the State of Oregon, I am submitting testimony in opposition to SB 1549. I work full-time nights, plus overtime, for a staffing agency in the Portland area, supporting local hospitals and their patients. On a regular basis, I experience the impact of the current nursing shortage on both my co-workers (CNAs, LPNs, RNs, and RTs) and patients. The impact is only negative. For patients, the impact leads to potentially unsafe conditions due to stressed nurses, long wait times, late medications, and less than optimal wound care, oral care, and pressure sore risk reduction. For myself and coworkers, the impact is both physical and emotional. Having 7-8 complex patients, when a 4 patient load would allow for standard care, is physically demanding, requiring taxing patient lifting and extended periods of the 12-hour shift on one's feet. We leave physically exhausted and are most often unable to leave after the 12 hours due to the need to document all our care, something difficult to accomplish within the 12-hour shift due to the high patient load. We leave emotionally exhausted because we enter this profession with a heart of caring, a heart to provide excellent clinical skills combined with an individualized approach to the psychosocial needs of ill people. When we are rushed, stressed, unable to meet needs in a timely manner, emotional exhaustion occurs. Unfortunately, the current state of nursing care in my experience has been referred to as "drive-by nursing". Brief encounters target only the most obvious of concerns, leaving patients unsatisfied and at risk of falling through the proverbial cracks. It is for all these reasons that I oppose SB 1549. I can assure you that having OHA determine rates of pay for temporary agencies will result in a further exacerbation of the staffing crisis we're experiencing. I will personally be leaving full-time status in the wake of pay decreases, and I am aware of other nurses who have reported the same.