



February 13, 2023

Chair Patterson, Vice-Chair Hayden, and members of the committee,

Thank you for considering this testimony in support of Senate Bill 818. My name is Emerson Hamlin, and I am a political organizer for the Oregon Nurses Association (ONA). ONA is a nurses union and professional association representing over 15,000 health care workers and providers, including registered nurses, advanced practice nurses, and allied health workers. Our members work in urban and rural hospitals, clinics, school-based health centers, and county health departments across Oregon.

Our nurses consistently report being overwhelmed by the number of patients experiencing mental and behavioral health crises, including those reporting suicidality. This is true for our members who work specifically in behavioral and mental health care, in hospitals like Unity and OHSU, but it is also true for our nurses who do not hold such specializations, and who are working in emergency rooms and hospitals across our state. Our nurses do their best to serve all patients and provide them with the resources they need, but they consistently tell us that there are simply not enough supports for patients who need mental and behavioral health care. Among the challenges our nurses are facing is a lack of training: according to Oregon Health Authority's data report on suicide prevention training for medical and behavioral health providers, 38.9% of nursing licensees reported completing a suicide prevention training, and 52% reported that their training was 2 hours or less.¹ Our nurses strive to serve their patients to the best of their ability; if additional training was offered, many would be eager to take it.

SB 818 creates that opportunity for further training, by directing OHA to create suicide prevention trainings specific to healthcare professionals. Such a training would provide our nurses with the skills to assess patients, help them to create safety plans, and, ultimately, prevent suicide. ONA urges your support of SB 818, so that our nurses are equipped to provide the best possible care to Oregonians. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Emerson Hamlin

Political Organizer at Oregon Nurses Association

¹ Holcomb, Chelsea (2023). *Suicide prevention training for medical and behavioral health providers: Data report to the Legislature*. Oregon Health Authority.