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February 20, 2023

To the House Committee on Behavioral Health and Health Care in Support of HB 2698

Dear Reps Nosse, Goodwin, Nelson, Bowman, Conrad, Dexter, Diehl, Javadi, Morgan, Pham, and Tran,

My name is Genee Tennent and I am a nurse at Samaritan Albany General Hospital.

Nurses in Oregon are desperate. I think we all have a feeling of dread; that it is only a matter of time before we have a terrible incident. We recently lost 3 nurses to other facilities due to the perception that "their staffing is better." We have also had multiple staff leave the bedside to become a traveling nurse because of the significantly higher pay. Essentially, it is the constant stress in our daily work environment that leaves nurses feeling it just isn't worth the mental, emotional and physical stress - not to mention that many nurses fear losing their licenses. The staffing crisis means we are always understaffed and we get constant pressure from the hospital to take extra shifts above and beyond full time hours becomes. The situation is so bad that we take on new graduates - early career RNs with NO ED experience - and, because we are short staffed and over run, the training has been less than optimal for these poor souls. We are in a crisis of staffing, and we need help. That's why I support HB 2967.

Key findings from a 2022 Oregon Nurses Association Safe Staffing Survey include: Less than 1% of Oregon's nurses report that their unit is always staffed appropriately – meaning 99% of units in Oregon's hospitals are sometimes or never staffed appropriately; 50% of nurses report they are caring for too many patients on most of their shifts; Oregon patients are negatively impacted by improper staffing (when a unit is short staffed, 78% of nurses say there are delays in responding to patient call lights, 76% say there are medication delays, 72% report delays in providing hygiene and nutrition care, 71% say there are delays in pain assessment and intervention, and 66% report that units that are understaffed result in increased length of stays for patients and delays in discharging a patient); 92% of nurses report missing meal and rest breaks, with 42% of nurses reporting that they miss meal and breaks on most of their shifts. ONA's survey also asked nurses about Oregon's current hospital nurse staffing law and how well the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) is enforcing that law. The findings clearly indicate that Oregon's current law is not working in large part because OHA fails to enforce the law.

Specifically, 85% of nurses report that their unit is not being staffed according to Oregon law, and 84% of nurses believe that OHA has been ineffective in enforcing Oregon law. These failures to enforce the law, combined with consistent and historic unsafe staffing levels across the state have led to a crisis in staffing, but also a crisis in nurse turnover. About 90% of nurse respondents reported that staff turnover in their unit has been high (36%) to very high (54%.) Of those who reported high or very high turnover, 84% report that turnover has had a negative impact on their working conditions and on their ability to provide quality patient care.

Your voter,

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