

I am an ER nurse in the Portland Metro area. I have worked for Providence for almost 15 years and over that time have seen the emphasis shift away from patient care and towards maximizing profits. Nurse staffing and nurse to patient ratios have increasingly gone by the wayside. As a direct care nurse, I cannot emphasize enough that the more patients a nurse has to care for, the worse the outcomes are for the patient.

I understand that there must be a balance between the income a hospital generates and staffing levels, which are a major cost. In order to facilitate this balance there must be laws in place that ultimately allow for safe patient care. It seems to me, as a frontline nurse, that the current staffing laws in Oregon are effectively toothless. There have been many times in recent years that I have had anywhere from 6-8 patients in the ER, including multiple ICU patients at the same time as suicidal patients who need 1:1 care. It is heartbreaking at these times to know that in order to prevent one patient from dying, I have to leave another unattended, lying in their own urine, others screaming in pain.

In my over 15 years as a nurse I have never seen more nurses quit than I have in the past 2 years. The overwhelming majority of the dozens of nurses I personally know who have quit point to the heartbreak of being unable to adequately care for their patients because of poor staffing levels. The current laws in Oregon are not working to keep our patients safe. I cannot urge you strongly enough to vote in favor of House Bill 2697.