

Abby Nickels
807 W. 21st St.
Vancouver, WA 98660

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RE: Testimony in Support of HB 2697

To the House Committee on Behavioral Health and Health Care

My name is Abby Nickels and I am a nurse at OHSU in the Primary Care Clinic at Center for Women's Health.

Management at hospitals and clinics across Oregon have shared dozens of messages praising nurses as "heroes," while, at the same time, ignoring our repeated pleas for assistance. I have only worked in Oregon for one year but can attest from working as a nurse over the last three years has been extremely difficult for nurses. We don't care about being called heroes; we want help. We need more staff.

Safe staffing ratios in hospitals and clinics are directly correlated with less medical errors. Would you want your loved one to be cared for by a nurse that was being stretched thin?

Little things add up to big things QUICKLY with our most vulnerable populations. Any hospital in Oregon should be putting patients before profits. Putting a greater investment into paying primary care doctors better and staffing with RNs and other support staff to adequately manage those patients would result in less strain on our hospital systems and directly reflect in safe staffing ratios for hospital nurses and staff!

Our community deserves better. Oregon's nurses deserve better, and our patients deserve more staff.

The work environment for nurses at my clinic is troubling. Not only are we often understaffed, we frequently do not have adequate staff to ensure we get the legally required breaks. Staffing shortages also mean that many nurses come into work feeling unwell out of a sense of duty to their units and that we aren't taking time off for vacations or appointments. We are burning out at a record pace.

The problem we have in Oregon is not that we have enough nurses. The problem is we don't have enough nurses who are willing to work in these conditions.

Please, help nurses and our patients by passing HB 2697.

Sincerely yours,

Abby Nickels