

Submitter: Justene Wallis

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Behavioral Health and Health Care

Measure: HB2697

Justene Wallis
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RE: Testimony in Support of HB 2697

To the House Committee on Behavioral Health and Health Care,

My name is Justene Wallis and I am an outpatient infusion nurse at OHSU in the Knight Cancer Institute who previously worked inpatient on the medical/surgical oncology unit, 13th floor Kohler Pavilion.

I am writing to tell you that we need more staff to ensure that everyone at the hospital is safe, patients and nurses alike. The current situation is untenable and if left without improvement will lead to more harm for all involved. Patients in the hospital are coming to us sicker and management is not responding to the increased workload of caring for these critically ill patients. Setting rules for nurse to patient ratios would ensure that hospitals hire more staff to ensure a safe environment for all involved.

I left inpatient nursing at the beginning of 2022 because I realized I could no longer be the nurse I wanted to be with our staffing ratios. Every shift I started knowing that it was very likely one of my patients would not receive the attention I wanted to give them because I did not have the time with my patient load. I knew this would happen even though I often skipped all my breaks. I was constantly on edge hoping I hadn't missed some vital piece of information that would guide my care for a patient to help them heal faster or intervene quickly if they were worsening. At the same time I was sacrificing my health to try and care for more patients than I could handle, losing 10 lbs in one month while spiraling mentally. I left nursing at the bedside because it was not what I had imagined it to be and could not protect myself and my patients. I am hopeful though that HB 2697 will help us move back towards what nursing can and should be. A career where nurses can safely practice our skill of caring for patients while taking care of ourselves.

Sincerely yours,

Justene Wallis