

Rebecca Davis
5110 SW Slavin Rd. Apt. 110
Portland, Oregon, 97239

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RE: Testimony in Support of HB 2697

To the House Committee on Behavioral Health and Health Care:

My name is Rebecca Davis, and I am a Registered Nurse at Oregon Health and Science University on the Cardiovascular Thoracic Intermediate Care Unit.

To be a nurse is an incredible privilege. We get to be present, providing love and care for our community members' in their hardest moments. Imagine the impact of braiding your patient's hair after it became matted from a month spent in the ICU. Imagine offering a warm embrace to a patient's family member after you tirelessly administered CPR to save the patient's life. Imagine having the time to educate your patient on how to wean themselves off of prescribed opioids after leaving the hospital following an open heart surgery.

This is hard work, but we are present in these moments because it's what we love to do. This is what gives our work purpose. I am here to tell you that because of the staffing crisis and hospital executives' refusal to put patients over profits, opportunities to sit in these tough moments are few and far between.

I wish I could say that sitting with someone in their grief and healing is all that we are missing out on due to short staffing. Let the data speak for itself, when the nurse-to-patient ratio reaches unsafe levels, patient care suffers. Falls increase, medication errors rise, infections soar, complaints of pain are not able to be addressed, bed baths get postponed for days, sometimes weeks. Just last month, I had tears swelling in my eyes as I helped a patient shower who hadn't been bathed in the hospital in weeks. Realizing in that moment that I hadn't been able to assist in showering a patient in over 10 months. At one of the leading hospitals in Oregon, is this how you would tolerate your family member being treated? It's not because we do not want to address these things, it's because we simply cannot. It's not because there are too few Registered Nurses in our state, it's that we are not staffed appropriately to have the privilege to properly care for our patients. Nursing is a delicate balance of competing priorities but to ensure that all priorities are met with attention and care, a single nurse simply needs the support of more staff.

Wouldn't you rather your nurses, the healers of our community, have the ability to properly care for patients rather than put out fire after fire until they're all beyond burnt out? Safe staffing is the fire hose that soothes and solves the worst fires.

Sincerely Yours,

Rebecca Davis