

Heather Long, RN, BSN, BMTCN
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RE: Testimony in Support of HB 2697

To the House Committee on Behavioral Health and Health Care

My name is Heather Long and I am a nurse at Oregon Health Sciences University in the Hematology/Stem Cell Transplant Unit

I am tired. Not of my patients or my job, but of being short staffed at every shift, of being asked to work 16 hour shifts, of getting no breaks on a 12 hour night shift then falling asleep at the wheel on the way home. It is exhausting being asked to perform at such a high level of nursing with breaks only covered if we give our break buddy our 3 or 4 patients on top of their own for an hour. It is hard enough worrying about my own patients and fearing I will miss something that might result in a life lost but that stress doubles when I take on my buddy's patients. The stress is forcing me out of bedside nursing altogether in a field I thought I would work in until I retired. Tonight, in fact, is my last night shift. I didn't want to leave without speaking up.

HB 2697 seeks to address many of the causes of our health care staffing shortages. The shortages have been amplified by the pandemic but not caused by them. The shortages won't go away as the pandemic dies down because there are inherent problems in the system. The last 10 years have shown that the hospitals in this state are not willing on their own to help us with safe staffing and are not helping us to get legally required breaks to rest, eat, or go to the bathroom. And the hospitals have been profiting off of us in this matter—automatically subtracting breaks from our pay whether we get them or not. In 2022, I started adjusting my timecard to reflect my missed breaks. At year end, my paycheck reflected \$2,314.34 they had to pay me back for my missed breaks. If averaged, means that in the prior 11 years, they took as much as \$25,454 (\$2,313 x11) from me for breaks I never got but for which they got work. And I am just one nurse. If the hospitals are not willing to make the necessary changes to provide humane treatment of staff and safe conditions for patients, legislation is our only recourse. Please help nurses and patients by passing HB 2697.

Sincerely,

Heather Long, RN, BSN, BMTCN