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RE: Testimony in Support of HB 2697

To the House Committee on Behavioral Health and Health Care

My name is Katie Dahlberg and I am a nurse at *OHSU* in the *Orthopaedic/Head & Neck unit*.

Having been a nurse for over 16 years has given me a career of experiences that do not come from all the books we read and all the tests we complete in nursing school. They come from the ones who were there before us; showing us how to advocate for our patients to the team of doctors; teaching us how to troubleshoot a piece of equipment or a difficult tube placement. The art of nursing doesn't happen in isolation but is a true team effort.

Throughout the last three years, I have seen experienced nurses like myself flee the bedside and taking their hard earned knowledge with them. They aren't leaving because they have lost their passion for their patients, but rather that hospitals continue to throw more or more expectations on their staff each day. If we are short a CNA, they say the nurse can do that. If we are short phlebotomists, the nurse can do that as well. If we are short respiratory therapists, of course, the nurse can do that. All this means that the nurse has less time to do their nurse tasks, the tasks that require our scientific mind to be at its best to provide quality care to their patients.

Despite being tasked with sicker and sicker patients, we are being asked to do more with less support. This lack of support also includes the working environment itself. Nurses are not able to step away from their work to get a 15 minute break, much less a full 30 minute meal break due to unsafe break coverage. Currently we are handing off our full assignment to another nurse with a full assignment of their own to take our breaks. This means a nurse could be caring for 8 patients; and if the nurse were to take all their allotted breaks, this 8 patient assignment would be for a total of an hour and 15 minutes during a 12 hour shift. This is not safe and this pressure from the hospitals to do more with less needs to stop.

Please support HB 2697 and give the nurses working conditions that allow them to practice the art of nursing.

Sincerely,  
Katie Dahlberg