

Ari Rapkin
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RE: Testimony in Support of HB 2697

To the House Committee on Behavioral Health and Health Care:

My name is Ari Rapkin and I am a nurse in primary care at Wallace Medical.

I care for a highly-underserved and marginalized patient population at a Federally-Qualified Health Center. While I don't work inpatient in a hospital, the quality of care delivered to my patients when they are hospitalized is a matter of life and death. I see every week that whether Portland hospitals have safe staffing levels affects the health outcomes for my patients when they become very ill or injured and need hospital care, and directly impacts their willingness to return to the emergency room or hospital when they next have a health crisis. How can I help someone having a heart attack if they are unwilling to go to the emergency room due to substandard care during a past hospitalization? How am I supposed to feel if my patient does get hospitalized but despite intense efforts by all the hospital staff, they get substandard care and then have a permanent health problem or disability as a result, which I manage the consequences of for years afterwards?

It is demoralizing to work year after year in a broken health care system, where skillful efforts by individual staff cannot compensate for the systemic problems we faced for years, well before the pandemic. Management at hospitals across Oregon have shared dozens of messages praising nurses as "heroes," while, at the same time, ignoring our repeated pleas for assistance. To be frank, these last few years have been extremely difficult for nurses. We don't care about being called heroes; we want help.

We need more staff.

Safe staffing ratios 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? We're human and it's easy to miss the little things when we've got a lot on our plate. Little things add up to big things QUICKLY with our critically ill patients. Our hospitals should be putting our patients before profits. It's the moral and humane thing to do. Our community deserves better. Oregon's nurse deserve better, and our patients deserve more staff.

Please support HB 2697 and give nurses what they really need: help.

We all know that Oregon had a staffing shortage long before the pandemic. Yes, the COVID 19 pandemic has made already existing staffing issues worse, and Oregon is now facing a full-blown crisis as countless overworked and undervalued healthcare workers leave the bedside in search of safer working conditions, better pay, or simply leaving their profession entirely. Nurses and other health care workers have been asking hospital executives and managers for help for more than a decade, and we have not gotten it. HB 2697 seeks to address many of the root causes of this crisis including requiring minimum safe nurse staffing and enforcement of legally required rest and meal breaks. The problem in Oregon is not that we don't 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,

Ari Rapkin, RN, BSN