

February 28, 2023

Paxton Rothwell
Portland, OR 97212

Oregon House Committee on Behavioral Health and Health Care
RE: Support HB 2697

Dear Chair Nosse, Vice-Chair Goodwin, Vice-Chair Nelson, and other members of the Committee,

My name is Paxton Rothwell and I live in Northeast Portland. From January to June of 2022 I worked as a Valet driver at the medical office building entrance to Legacy Emanuel Medical Center in North Portland. I witnessed first hand the issues that hospital understaffing has on not only the medical staff, but the patients as well. Many of my valet customers expressed frustration at the ineffectiveness of the hospital staff they saw during their visit. When patients see the frustrations of the staff working at any business it means that something is wrong about how that business is run.

My partner's sister works as a nurse at a hospital in Seattle. I've heard horror stories of managers pressuring her to work more hours to cover shifts, assigning her to wards that she is not familiar with, and frequently asking her to come in on her days off. She's only been a nurse for a year, and she's already thinking about leaving the field for a less stressful career.

Nurses and other hospital staff are the backbone of our healthcare industry. They deserve to be protected in their workplaces. This is where this bill can come in. Requiring hospitals to create and abide by a strict staffing plan would give overworked hospital staff the certainty to know what workload to expect and when to expect breaks. It would give these hospital staff the same certainties that many of us are guaranteed already in our jobs. We need nurses to be respected at work in order to have a robust health care system.

Due to health care privatization, hospital executives have their eye on one thing: profit for shareholders. This lust for profit incentivizes managers to push employees beyond their breaking point. While this works for short term gains, it leads to long term losses. Employees get burnt out and quit. Word gets around that the work culture is toxic so fewer people train to take their place. Eventually there is a worker shortage like there is for nurses today. It's a vicious cycle that cannot be stymied by the profit obsessed private sector alone. The State needs to

intervene so that we Oregonians have a functional and healthy health care system. Obviously the greater problem is using people's health care needs as a way to gain profit, but that is not something this bill can address. I do hope a future bill can work to create a public health care system in Oregon that serves people instead of lining executives pockets with money.

I want to end by saying this bill can, and should, go much further than it does. The daily fee for not following the set staff schedule should be set as a percent of the hospital's daily profits, say 5%. Setting an arbitrary dollar amount creates a fine that can be seen as a "cost of doing business". Hospitals can keep burning out hospital staff by not following the mandated schedule if the fine is less than the profit they can make from overwhelming their staff.

The for profit hospitals in this State need to be sent a clear message that people-oriented health care comes first before their profits. Please support HB 2697 and amend it to make fines harder to include in the "cost of doing business."

Sincerely,
Paxton Rothwell
PCP to HD-43