

RE: HB 2697 and Missed Rest and Meal Breaks

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Attn: Members of the House Committee on Behavioral Health and Health Care

Dear Chair Rob Nosse, Vice-Chair Christine Goodwin, Vice-Chair Travis Nelson, and Committee Members,

My name is Valarie THomas and I am a nurse at St. Charles Medical Center, Bend.

Late last year I sat down to do some math related to me shifts and my breaks.

At that time, I had done 50 weeks of work in 2022. I worked 156 shifts during those weeks and had received 58 lunch breaks.

During those 156 shifts, I was given a legally required lunch break approximately 30% of the time. This may not seem like a huge problem from the perspective of people who don't work in health care or who are not a nurse, but the research on the impact of missed breaks on the quality of nursing care is unequivocal.

According to a recent study from the National Library of Medicine, RNs who worked overtime or without having legally required breaks reported an 88% increase in poor patient safety, an 86% increasing in patient care being incomplete, and a 45% increase in poor quality nursing care overall.

Nurses who do not get rest breaks are more tired, more likely to make medication errors, are more likely to miss signs of declining health, are more likely to burnout and are more likely to leave the profession.

Every one of my colleagues in acute care settings have the exact same story as mine; we all missed meal and rest breaks, we all get exhausted, we are all more likely to make medication errors because of our exhaustion and burn out, and we have all considered leaving the bedside.

HB 2697 adds missed breaks to annual staffing committee review processes to ensure that the number of missed meals and rest breaks is recorded and included in a hospital's staffing plan.

This bill also establishes the minimum numbers of nursing staff (including licensed practical nurses and certified nursing assistants) required on a shift to ensure staff get their legally required rest and meal breaks.

Finally, HB 2697 will fine hospitals \$200 for each missed meal or rest break for direct care staff; a consequence of real substance when you consider that, if HB 2697 were in place in 2022, my facility would have been fined \$19,600 just for my missed breaks.

Add another 30 nurses with a similar number of missed breaks to that number (which is a very, very conservative estimate), and fines would total nearly \$600,000.

Facilities must take missed breaks seriously. HB 2697 will ensure that they do.

Thank you for considering this important bill.

Valarie Thomas