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RE: Testimony in Support of HB 2697

To the House Committee on Behavioral Health and Health Care

My name is Melissa Dettner and I am a registered nurse at Peacehealth Riverbend in the Short Stay Unit, formally at Peacehealth University District Hospital within the float pool.

We as nurses are crying for help, begging for help and feel unheard. What more can we do to get the attention of the public and get the attention of our government. The healthcare system is sinking and the nursing profession can not continue to hold that burden on their shoulders. Hospital leadership continue to press that budget cuts need to be made, that staffing needs to be reduced while charting requirements increase and the acuity/intensity of the patients are skyrocketing.

I can't imagine someone who would be opposed to HB 2697. We are asking to be able to take care of our patients 100% of the time in a safe manner. I have worked within the Emergency Department where we frequently see patients who are having a mental crisis. When we care for a suicidal patient we are required to have one staff member with that one patient, this is for patient safety due to the high risk of harm to themselves. Many times I have been asked to watch over more than one high risk patient at a time, being told "we don't have the staff". This is what causes moral injury, increased risk of patient/staff injury and nurses quitting the profession. On a weekly basis nurses are asked to take care of sicker patients, more patients than the nurse can safely handle and to skip or miss a meal/break due to staffing shortages.

Please do not let hospital executives discourage you from passing HB 2697. You would not let a firefighter go into a high rise building by themselves without proper equipment or safety measures in place. But nurses are being asked to sacrifice patient and staff safety with unrealistic expectations. I am exhausted, we are exhausted, we need HB 2697 to pass so that we can have hope again. I love being a nurse, I love caring for patients but we need to demand safe staffing 100% of the time with mandated nurse/patient ratios.

Thank you for your time,

Melissa Dettner, RN