

Submitter: Vicki Knudsen

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Behavioral Health and Health Care

Measure: HB2697

Vicki E. Knudsen

February 28, 2023

RE: Testimony in Support of HB2697

To the House Committee on Behavioral Health and Health Care

Good evening, Chair Nosse, Vice Chairs, and Committee members. For the record, my name is Vicki Knudsen. I have worked as a Medical/Surgical nurse for over 20 years at Providence Medford Medical Center, and I support HB2697.

Working at my hospital is like being a passenger on a crashing plane: You must put on your own oxygen first to care for those who are unable to care for themselves, but we are starving for oxygen. We are facing an unprecedented staffing crisis and the oxygen we need for survival are the staffing ratios and accountability for hospitals when they refuse to put patient safety first.

Here is a recent example. Within 15 minutes of preparing a patient for surgery, I was paged that my "new admit had arrived". I never received communication that I was getting a postoperative admit, so I never had the chance to explain how unsafe it was. This was my 5th patient and tipped my assignment from manageable into chaos. I made sure my new patient was stable and went to prepare my other patient for surgery. By the time I returned to admit my new patient they had become unstable, with severely low blood pressure and heart rate that required over an hour of bedside care to stabilize them. I believe the staffing ratios in HB2697 can prevent these events from occurring.

Because of this unsafe assignment, all my charting was delayed until the end of the shift, requiring 2.5 hours of voluntary overtime, and making it a 15-hour day. Patient care, medical orders, treatments, and pain management had to be either delayed or omitted. I cried while I charted because I felt I had let my patients down. I felt demoralized and utterly exhausted physically and emotionally. The number of patients in my assignment decides the amount of care they receive and whether that care can be completed or triaged.

Status quo is a recipe for poor outcomes and an increase in nurse burnout.

The staffing ratios in HB2697 would give the lifesaving oxygen required to help keep patients safe and enable nurses to feel safe about staying at, or coming back to, work at the bedside. Passing this bill shows the State of Oregon is serious about protecting both patients and nursing staff.

On behalf of fellow nurses and the patients that rely on our care, I implore you to pass HB2697.

Sincerely,

Vicki E. Knudsen B.S.N., R.N.