

Good evening, Chair Nosse, Vice-Chairs, and committee members. My name is Gina Ottinger. I have been a nightshift nurse for 15 years at Providence St. Vincent Medical Center in Portland. For the past 12 years, I have worked in the emergency department and in the past 6 years I have been a charge nurse. We see roughly 250 patients a day and it is not uncommon for my department to have up to 100 patients with 50 in the lobby.

I'm here today for patient safety and the future of nursing in Oregon.

I have watched firsthand as over half nurses have left my department in the past three years.

Due to the loss of nurses, we are forced to be thinly staffed. Our current working conditions have deteriorated so much that we are asking new grads to take more patients than they can or should ever be asked to safely care for. Nurses are being pushed to a breaking point as we take unsafe staffing assignments and miss breaks. Healthcare organizations want to say this is because we don't have enough nurses. There is no shortage of nurses in Oregon. There is a shortage of nurses willing to work in these conditions.

I have been on both house wide and my unit-based staffing committees over the past 7 years. In this time, I have worked tirelessly on staffing plans for the emergency department. These staffing plans were instituted but were often not upheld. We were constantly forced outside of ratios and missed breaks. I have filed unsafe staffing violations and complaints with the Oregon Health Authority only to have nothing enforced.

HB2697 will enforce our staffing plans and provide needed penalties for violations of the staffing plans. The mandates in this bill are necessary to provide safe and competent care. Without enforcement, patients are at risk of adverse events, errors, and potential harm.

Nurses are the undeniable essence of humanity providing the framework that support our healthcare system today.

I am standing here because patients are the most important part of my job. I cannot in good conscience continue to work without raising the alarm and spelling out that human lives are at stake.

Please support this bill to invest in the future of nursing for Oregon. The safety of you and your family depends on this.