

My name is Stephanie Cook, I am a licensed nursing home administrator at Mirabella Portland. I am writing in support of HB 2665.

Regulations on staffing ratios in nursing homes is getting only more stringent which leaves nursing homes like ours at a fork in the road. Do we use agency staff to keep our census up, or lower our census to stay in compliance and keep our costs reasonable?

Choosing to use agency staff results in our expenses being far higher than budgeted with the reimbursement rates from Medicare and other insurance providers not covering the costs. This puts our operations in the negative and is not sustainable for our residents.

Choosing to lower the census leads to overcrowding at hospitals and sometimes unsafe and unsuccessful discharges for patients who end up home without enough help because nursing homes don't have the staff to take them.

With no caps on agency wages, and competition for agency staff at an all time high, things have gotten out of hand. Facilities are trying to outbid each other to entice staff to pick up their shifts instead of someone else's.

Most agencies are also offering facilities the option to offer shift pickup bonuses and/or contract completion bonuses to agency staff, which creates an even further competitive nature pitting nursing homes and hospitals against each other in the fight for staff. There's also hazard pay for any staff working with COVID-positive patients, overtime charges and sometimes shift differentials depending on the agency.

The costs are becoming astronomical.

The promise of unparalleled wages offered by agencies is luring longstanding CNAs and Nurses out of their home facilities and into agency, further compounding the staffing issues and use of agency. It has turned into a vicious cycle and the only way out is by putting some rules in place like this bill, to cap the wages related to the pricing in the market.

We need to remember that the patients are at the center of this divide, and they are the one's suffering. I support this bill on behalf of my company, my staff and most importantly, my residents.

Thank you,

Stephanie Cook

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