



3/22/23

Good morning Co-chairs Valderrama, Campos and members of the Joint Subcommittee On Human Services,

My name is Kristen Brown and I am an admissions triage nurse at the Oregon State Hospital. I'm a resident of Albany and also a union member of Oregon AFSCME. We serve the underserved in Oregon.

It is no secret that the state of Oregon's mental health, behavioral health, and addictions systems are broken. Resources are slim, and it is the people of the state who suffer. I am one of two nurses at the Oregon State Hospital that does admissions triage for all admissions to OSH. We are seeing record numbers of orders for aid and assist. We have broken records for admissions in the last year. In one week the two of us did 47 admissions, in one month 149, and since the Mosman order came into effect in September 2022 the two of us have done well over 650 admissions. We work hard. We are the initial advocates for these patients psychological and physiological needs before they are admitted. We are also tired. We have worked without consistent breaks for months. When one of us is out, the other is drowning with the workload. We need help.

The problem is the whole hospital needs nurses. The acuity within the hospital has never been higher. Our patient populations' psychological and medical needs are greater than we've seen before. Addiction compounded with mental illness have made the population both challenging and at times extremely dangerous for staff as well as other patients.. We are trying to do our best with the resources that we have but we cannot perform all the duties without adequate staffing. Stability within staffing is crucial to meet the needs of a challenging patient population as we continuously struggle for compliance with Mink. Treating this population requires the care team be invested in their patient population, this cannot and will not occur with a nursing team made up of primarily agency and temporary staff.

While the LOA's are helpful in the short-term, long-term solutions are necessary to address the staffing issues at Oregon State Hospital. I understand the rate of pay at OSH is considered above that of some organizations competing for nurses in the market today. I can also say that despite a slightly higher wage, OSH has remained in a deficit of nurses for many years. This will not change and will likely again increase with the loss of the current differentials. To attract and retain nurses, you need a strong core staff that can address the needs of the higher acuity patient's and invested in the team they are part of. To recruit quality, you're going to have to pay for quality.

Kristen C Brown