



Allow Employers to Address Oregon’s Critical Health Care Workforce Shortage by Passing HB 3205

According to the Oregon Health Authority’s Oregon Health Care Workforce Needs Assessment 2023¹, the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated Oregon’s shortage of many types of health care providers, especially in rural areas. This same report concluded that “some health care professions need increased compensation to attract new individuals or increase retention.”

As the pandemic, burnout, and challenging work environments have put increased stress on an already strained health care workforce, many employers turned to hiring and retention bonuses to attract new and retain existing employees. But when the Governor’s COVID state of emergency ended in Sept. 2022, so did the hiring and retention bonus exemption from Oregon’s Equal Pay Act.

Healthcare employers need the legislature to permanently exempt hiring and retention bonuses from the Equal Pay Act to help address staffing and hiring shortages and ensure access to healthcare.



Hospitals and clinics report significant staffing challenges, which is impacting patient access to critical health services.



EMS providers in Oregon are experiencing a significant workforce shortage. Prehospital EMS service providers are at a breaking point because there are not enough paramedics to meet the increasing demands for EMS services and inter-facility medical transports. As a result, EMS providers are experiencing decreasing availability to respond to 911 calls and increasing response time.



Dental offices report that dentists are unable to schedule full days of patients due to shortages of auxiliary staff, including dental assistants and hygienists.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, we’ve seen how a lack of available staffing has led to a shortage of hospital beds, an inability to discharge patients to long-term care facilities, and even in some cases patient deaths.² Oregonians deserve to have access to quality care, wherever they live, and that starts with ensuring adequate health care staffing.

Unless the legislature acts to make this bonus pay exemption permanent, Oregon’s health care workforce will continue to see shortages, impacting quality of and access to care statewide.

¹ <https://www.oregon.gov/oha/HPA/HP-HCW/Documents/2023-Oregon-Health-Care-Workforce-Needs-Assessment.pdf>

² <https://oregoncapitalchronicle.com/2022/09/23/lack-of-staff-in-hospitals-leads-to-patient-deaths-health-officials-say/>