



To: House Committee on General Government, Emergency Management and Veterans

From: Ethan J. Garlock

Date: 2/4/2024

Subject: Support for Public Safety Workforce Stabilization Act of 2024

Dear Chair Grayber, Vice Chair Lewis, Vice Chair Tran, and members of the committee,

My name is Ethan J. Garlock, I am writing in support of HB 4045 Public Safety Workforce Stabilization to retain and recruit workers at the Oregon State Hospital (OSH) and 911 telecommunicators.

I began my career at OSH as a Custodian. My job today entails custodial duties and keeping the units and areas sanitized and clean within the secure perimeter of the campus.

I work at the Salem campus. Generally speaking, in my 4-10 shift, I work two units as opposed to the one unit some of my fellow coworkers' work. I am not only exposed to double the amount of patient contact in half the time due to the different nature of every ward in the hospital. I have to do double the work. I am always watching over my shoulders and keeping an eye on my surroundings at all times as soon as I am on the secured perimeter. Most of my coworkers with longer tenure seem to suffer from paranoia, PTSD, and are generally jumpy to noises and seem over worked and relatively uncomfortable with going to management for any reason.

From the time I began working here to now I have had a relatively poor experience. It seems that safety measures are only implemented after failed inspections. For example, eye wash stations to the EVS closets and PPE were only

implemented after an OSHA inspection that the hospital failed. Allowing them to declare are modified working equipment as safe for our department's purposes with little to no information to back those claims up.

At times, it seems that safety concerns regarding patient contact are dismissed. I clean patient rooms and spaces while patients are there in and around those spaces as I have little to no choice in that matter. I have not been physically assaulted myself. Several of my direct coworkers have been assaulted since I started. The effects of which leave them shaken for days to allow them to deal with that potential trauma. My work equipment can just be pulled apart at the seams. Such as the cart which in turn means there is not much stopping a patient from getting to my chemicals or tools.

Unfortunately, despite the investments the Oregon Legislature has made in mental and behavioral health services, more needs to be done. The underfunding of services and critical staffing needs impacts the safety of the workforce and the quality of care for patients. This leads to workplace injuries and illnesses for state hospital workers, making the state's psychiatric institute the most dangerous place to work.

The reality is that many of my colleagues don't live long after retirement or carry with them an immense amount of physical and psychological trauma. With a lower retirement age and enhanced benefits.

Due to the compromises in the bill, I know that I will not see the full extent of the benefits. My hope is that this will we include as many classifications as possible or all staff that work inside the secure perimeter

OSH workers on the secure campus, like me, deserve improved retirement benefits that recognize the dignity and value of our years of service. These benefits are vital for the wellbeing of OSH workers who must often retire early due to the immense physical, emotional, and mental toll of their jobs. I ask members of the committee to fully support HB 4045.

This bill will immensely help the state's psychiatric and nursing workforce in the secure psychiatric facility. We need the Legislature to support the workers at OSH so we can continue to do our jobs: serving patients.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Ethan J. Garlock