



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

From: Jeff Morah

Date: 01/31/2024

RE: HB 4045 Public Safety Workforce Stabilization Act of 2024

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

My name is Jeff Morah. 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.

For the record, I am a resident of Junction city (JC). I began my career at OSH-JC as a Mental Health Security Technician. My job today entails providing safety and security within the secure perimeter of the campus. On any given day, I work with dozens of patients.

- As part of my job, I work within the secure perimeter – double doors and ID checks before working directly with patients.
- I respond to code green alarms and my role is to help ensure the physical safety of both clients and OSH-JC staff members.
- Security protocols are followed daily with checks of the interior quads, exterior perimeter, personal searches, and property searches.

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.

- I believe HB 4045 would improve the recruitment and retention issues.... In my experience its difficult to retain qualified staff due to the working environment.
- 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, I would like to focus on my own mental health and wellness.

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,

Jeff Morah