



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

From: Jon Paul Becerra, OSH Workers, Salem Campus. Activity Coordinator

Date: 02/05/2024

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 Jon Paul Becerra , 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 at the Salem Campus in 2009, when OSH still offered CNA classes. I was hired as a MHTT in the Acuity and Security Program. After that I was promoted to Mental Health Therapist 2, and I am now working as Activities Coordinator. My job today entails making sure patients get from unit to activities and classes with the clinicians within the secure perimeter of the campus. On any given day, I work with approximately 20 patients per hour, 7 hours of my 10-hour shift. This does not count any overtime I work.

Over the course of my professional employment with OSH, I cannot count the number of times I have been involved in emergency codes, where staff have to go hands on with patients for their safety and the safety of others.

In 2017 I was injured while working, this injury has left permanent brain damage, also known as Traumatic Brain Injury. I spent 6 weeks in a neck brace, I also suffered from extreme emotional distress that impacted my personal relationships. With this injury, I am still affected to this day. At one point I separated from my partner, it took 2.5 years to be able to repair my personal relationships. I have experience more than one injury. I am just sharing this one story.

As an AC, we have codes during activities, that require any staff available to respond. The risk of personal and emotional injury is not based on job classification, but just walking into the secure perimeter. Patients are walking around in open yards. While staff walk across the grounds.

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 was 24 when I started working at OSH, I am now 39. I do not know if my body and emotional health will make it another 15 years. I support my family of 6, that includes a newborn and a partner in school. I would like to be able to live long enough to see those children grown and my partner succeed. 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.

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,

Jon Paul Becerra