



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

From: Viliam Jakubek

Date: 2/5/24

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 Viliam Jakubek, 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 the Oregon State Hospital as a Custodian. My job today entails sanitizing and cleaning ward hallways, patient rooms and common areas where patient traffic is moderate, all of this being within the secure perimeter of the campus. On any given day, I work around 20 to 25 patients at a time while doing my work.

I am a custodian at the Oregon State Hospital. I have worked here for one year and five months. My relevance to this issue stems from my safety as a custodian who works among patients in a direct contact environment. Last May, I was physically assaulted by a patient when I stopped to hold a door open for them and a staff that was escorting them at the time. This was at the entryway to a ward inside the secure perimeter where patient contact is usually common.

Aside from personal stress and physical trauma from the incident, I feel that this can help provide what I feel is evidence that people in my department work within close vicinity of patients. I personally don't have much knowledge on the pay system in regards to proper compensation for safety hazards, but I feel that it may not be enough to cover the mental and physical stresses caused by working in close contact with patients who can often easily get agitated or may be unhappy with something they are dealing with.

The secure perimeter is the area in which patients reside and do their activities. ID checks are required to ensure only staff are entering and exiting the perimeter.

A code green is a behavioral code called when backup staff is needed to help with a patient that may be having a bad time or a mental breakdown. My role in a code green is to collect my equipment and leave the area if it is safe. If I cannot leave, I must secure my cart and get to a safe area.

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.

This bill will positively impact on my work and home life, as I will feel a bit better knowing that something is being done about staff safety as well as better compensation for working in patient contact areas.

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,

Viliam Jakubek 2/5/24