

January 27, 2025

TO: Representative Ben Bowman, Chair
House Committee on Rules

FROM: Sara Walker, MD, Chief Medical Officer & Interim Superintendent
Oregon State Hospital
Oregon Health Authority

SUBJECT: HB 2932 – Relating to Exceptions to Prohibited Use of Official Position or Office

Chair Bowman, Vice-Chair Drazan, Vice-Chair Pham, and members of the committee, I am Sara Walker, the Chief Medical Officer and Interim Superintendent of the Oregon State Hospital.

I want to express the state hospital's support for HB 2932 and provide information about the benefits that the bill offers to the Oregon State Hospital. In most medical settings, a nurse can work outside of their scheduled time as a clinical instructor for a school of nursing and teach nursing students on the same campus they are employed. OSH employees are currently prohibited from working as clinical instructors by ORS 244.040 due to being public officials. This has had a negative impact on the accessibility of mental health nursing clinical rotations, resulting in nursing students having less exposure to mental health settings and careers, as well as being underprepared to manage psychiatric conditions regardless of the medical setting they work in. While OSH employees are not currently allowed to be clinical instructors, if this preclusion were removed, OSH nurses would take the opportunity to teach.

HB 2932 changes this statute to allow for public officials to receive compensation from post-secondary institutions in exchanging for teaching. The bill would allow OSH

staff to also serve as clinical faculty at our institution, build relationships with education institutions, and deepen student understanding of psychiatric patient care, which may lead to better recruitment of new graduate nurses. OSH would like to see the effective date of the bill moved up to August 1, 2025, so staff may be made readily available to teach the next incoming class.

The Oregon Health Authority's current strategic plan calls for bolstering the behavioral health workforce to improve mental health outcomes in our state, and this change to the ethics rule provides an opportunity to help make this happen. Passing vocational knowledge along to nursing students is an ethical calling for the nursing profession and a responsibility of industry professionals in addressing the nurse staffing shortage. Patient outcomes are greatly influenced by experienced nurses training students and there are no similar settings to the Oregon State Hospital in our state. Our facility would be a key player in producing nurses with a strong psychiatric nursing foundation.

Giving students a rich and thorough clinical experience at OSH by using OSH staff as expert clinical faculty will improve the likelihood of student retention as permanent staff upon graduation. Empowering OSH nurse faculty can significantly influence the career pathway and nursing practice of student nurses as they learn.

Thank you,

