

Stefanie RN
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Testimony in Support of UI for Striking Workers (SB 916)

Dear Legislators,

As a nurse of 4 years working in the Providence healthcare system, especially when my career started during COVID, I have seen a stark difference of the quality of care when units are fully staffed. When I worked in a unit that was chronically understaffed, as a charge nurse I had to take 2-3 patients, sometimes even a full patient load so that my colleagues would not be overloaded with 6-7 patients. Not only is that unsafe for the patients, but it creates a culture of burnout being normal as well as a high turnover of talented, caring nurses.

The HB 2697 law was a great step towards safe staffing as it created a standard of minimum nurse to patient ratios. This advocates for quality care that the community deserves, but also protect and strengthen the nursing field. I currently work in an observation unit called the Clinical Decision Unit (CDU). What I love about the unit is that the nurses actually have time to talk to ones in need, to really listen and advocate for them. We are able to notice critical changes in patients in a timely manner and initiate the appropriate life-saving responses. However, within the 2 years I've been there with the staffing law in place, management has tried to find ways to increase our 1:4 ratio into 1:5 which directly impedes us from spending the time with our patients that they so desperately need. Unfortunately, it appears that Providence Health & Services will do anything they can to circumvent this law and find loopholes in order to cut staffing to careless levels for the sake of their profit margins.

As a result, I am currently striking with my fellow colleagues to advocate for safe staffing and retention of current and future nurses. Nursing is an incredible field with lots of sacrifices, but is rewarding and fulfilling in its own right. I am sacrificing my pay and wellbeing to stand with others to fight for what our community deserves, as well as the future of nursing. Currently I have no income as my husband was laid off and is struggling to find work for almost a year now. We are now facing a dire situation as our savings have been depleted and our bills mount. Knowing I am not the only one struggling to hold the line and that others are facing even worse situations only strengthens my resolve, and shows the dedication nurses have to fight for what is fair and equitable.

We hope that the legislature will pass SB 916 in the 2025 session so that all Oregon workers who find themselves in similar situations will not have to choose between their conscience or destitution, and will be able to access funds already intended for them. This would also help level the playing field to an extent and help motivate employers to bargain timely and in good faith. I believe the message we are sending is historical and will demonstrate the power in numbers against corporations that have repeatedly demonstrated complete disregard for their own employees or community. If you care about the future of healthcare and the wellbeing of Oregonians, this bill will protect workers that are fighting for it alongside you.

Thank you for your time.