

Submitter: Kara Hayden
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Labor and Workplace Standards
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2792

I am writing as an Oregonian and a healthcare worker who has gone on strike in 2023 to uphold the quality of care for Oregonians. I am in favor of the transparency HB 2792 would begin to bring to Oregon's healthcare industry. I am a speech language pathologist for Providence Home Health and Hospice. Our bargaining unit consists of nearly every discipline (nurses, physical therapists, social workers, occupational therapists, speech language pathologists, bereavement counselors and more recently CNAs, LPNs, massage therapists, PTAs and COTAs).

It is incredibly frustrating to hear employers say at the bargaining table that while they might be able to afford the things we are asking for, they claim our asks aren't sustainable. But it would seem that they seem to find the sustainable solution is spending hundreds of thousands of dollars on hiring replacement nurses during strikes that they seem to regularly push our bargaining teams to call for because they drag their feet so much at the bargaining table months and months after contract expirations. This is despite efforts to get them to begin negotiations earlier and earlier to prevent this.

Our community deserves transparency on how much money is being spent and invested in temporary labor instead of investing in the community's workforce. There are many more preventable mistakes that occur during strikes and it seems replacement nurses truly do not understand local culture and preferences.

Our community deserves to know the extent of hospital and healthcare system employer avoidance of spending productively towards a fair contract.

When a strike occurs, healthcare systems tend to blame the workers for straining operations, workforce morale, and transparency. Healthcare systems often appear to spend significant resources to manage strikes and lockouts, yet these expenditures are not often reported, leaving the financial and ethical implications of hospital spending veiled from staff nurses and other workers and the community. The financial costs of strikes are very unclear and muddy with it reporting requirements in place. This lack of accountability undermines trust between hospitals, employees, and the public.

HB 2792 shines a light where bad-actor healthcare employers, like Providence, prefer to operate in the dark. The bill requires financial reports that include

recruitment, advertising, and compensation costs, and must be updated every 30 days during a strike and finalized within 30 days of a strike ending.

Oregonians deserve to know how their money, including their insurance benefit money, is spent—especially if it's being misspent. Mismanagement of finances has trickle down effects to increasing insurance premiums or even worse canceled insurance contracts with whole healthcare systems as evidenced by the most recent Aetna/Providence debacle. This limits access to care and options for care for thousands of Oregonians. Our hospitals and health systems are community resources which also rely on our tax dollars and tax exemptions. As our health systems expand and Oregonians' healthcare becomes more expensive, our community needs more information to perform our oversight responsibilities and ensure the benefits today's healthcare systems provide outweigh the bills they charge.