

Testimony of Kathy Keane

Chair, Bargaining Unit, Providence St. Vincent Hospital

Before the Oregon State Legislature

In Support of House Bill 2792

February 10, 2025

Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Kathy Keane, I serve as the Chair of the Bargaining Unit at Providence St. Vincent Hospital, and I am one of nearly 5,000 healthcare workers from Providence facilities that have been on strike, across the state, since January 10. I am here today to strongly support House Bill 2792, which would require hospitals to report expenditures on replacement workers during strikes and lockouts. This is not just about wages; it is about the true cost of hospital decisions - recruitment, travel, housing, food, security, and other related expenses - all of which are hidden from public view despite the significant amount of public funds hospitals receive.

Providence, one of Oregon's largest health systems, has a troubling history of financial opacity. When workers go on strike to fight for better patient care and working conditions, hospitals often spend millions of dollars on replacement workers, but those expenditures remain undisclosed. This lack of transparency means that Oregonians—whose tax dollars help fund these hospitals—have no way of knowing how much of their money is being spent to undermine frontline healthcare workers rather than invest in patient care.

This issue is not theoretical. During the strike at Providence hospitals across Oregon, reports indicated that the system brought in thousands of temporary workers while, at the same time, Providence claimed publicly that the contract proposals given to them by ONA represented care givers were “financially unviable.” The costs of recruiting, housing, transporting, and compensating these replacement workers were never disclosed, yet these expenditures directly affect the hospital’s financial health and its ability to meet the contract proposals from unionized members. Not to mention pay to deliver affordable care. The public has a right to know how these resources are allocated, particularly when hospitals claim financial hardship in contract negotiations while secretly spending exorbitant amounts on strike preparations.

Providence’s broader financial track record also raises serious concerns. Despite receiving over \$500 million in government relief funds during the COVID-19 pandemic, the health system has continued to close services, limit access to care, sell off operations to for-profit entities, all while demanding concessions from workers due to facing so-called “financial headwinds.” The Washington State Attorney General’s lawsuit against Providence for improper billing practices - resulting in \$137 million in medical debt forgiveness and over \$20 million in refunds to patients - further highlights the need for rigorous financial accountability in our hospital systems.

Hospitals receive significant state and federal funding, and their financial decisions impact every Oregonian. If they are spending

millions to recruit and house temporary workers instead of investing in safe staffing and patient care, the public deserves to know. If they are claiming financial hardship while also spending undisclosed millions on replacement workers, the public deserves to know.

House Bill 2792 ensures that hospitals report these expenditures, offering much-needed transparency and allowing lawmakers, patients, and communities to hold these institutions accountable.

I urge you to support House Bill 2792 to bring financial transparency to Oregon's healthcare system and ensure that public funds are used responsibly for patient care—not to obscure costly decisions that undermine frontline workers.

Thank you for your time and consideration.