



A STRONG VOICE FOR OREGON'S WORKERS

TO: Chair Grayber
Vice-chairs Muñoz and Elmer
Members of the Labor and Workplace Standards Committee
FR: Catie Theisen, Oregon AFL-CIO
RE: HB 2729 Support

February 10, 2025

The Oregon AFL-CIO represents 300,000 workers across Oregon and is a voice for all workers in the legislative process. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB 2729.

House Bill 2792 simply brings much-needed transparency to how hospitals spend money when they choose to replace striking or locked-out healthcare workers rather than to negotiate in good faith. Specifically, this bill would require hospitals to report the amount spent on recruiting and paying replacement workers during a labor dispute—including recruitment, advertising, and compensation costs—updated every 30 days throughout the dispute and finalized within 30 days after its resolution.

However, this bill is not just about financial reporting – it's about public accountability. Every year, Oregon's hospital systems receive hundreds of millions of dollars in public funds, whether through direct state and federal funding, Medicare and Medicaid reimbursements, or tax breaks granted in exchange for their nonprofit status. These resources are meant to support patient care, keep hospitals running, and ensure Oregonians have access to the healthcare they need.

Yet time and again, we see these same hospitals alleging they can't afford to compensate workers or make work places safer while also spending exorbitant amounts of their resources on temporary replacements, often at two to three times the wages of frontline caregivers like Certified Nursing Assistants—many living paycheck to paycheck, even after they were cheered for their efforts to care for Oregonians during the COVID-19 pandemic. These temporary staffing agencies are frequently from out of state, with travel and lodging expenses covered on top of their inflated pay. Workers are being told there's no money for fair wages, yet hospitals are funneling massive sums into stopgap solutions that fail to address the long-term crisis.

Transparency is a fundamental principle in public policy. We require public officials to disclose campaign contributions because we believe voters have a right to know who is funding their leaders. We require school districts to report budgets publicly because we believe communities should know how their tax dollars are being used. And yet, hospitals, some of the largest recipients of public money in the state, are allowed to make financial decisions behind closed doors, with no obligation to report where the money is going.

House Bill 2792 is a simple, commonsense solution: if a hospital chooses to spend money on replacing striking workers, they must report it.