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On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Labor and Workplace Standards

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2792

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RE: Testimony in Support for HB 2792

To the House Committee On Labor and Workplace Standards,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of HB2792. I am an Emergency Department RN who has witnessed firsthand the negative impacts that short-staffing and lack of resources has created.

There have been times that I and 5 of my colleagues have had to run a 50-bed ER during the middle of the night, having to shut down rooms, in order to make it through the night. A department of that size is required to have at least 15 nurses, as you never know when you will be all hands-on deck during an emergency.

The lack of proper staffing required patients and their loved ones to sit in the lobby waiting for care for unacceptable amounts of time, in pain and afraid, which the nurses always, unfortunately take the blame for. I am so exhausted of having to carry the burden and moral distress of public disapproval because the hospital system is refusing to adequately provide us the bare minimum, on the basis of "cost".

We serve a wide variety of patients in the emergency room who require all different types of resources; from case management, behavioral health and forensic nurse examiners. When those resources are not available, again due to "cost constraints", patients suffer.

How does this relate to this bill?

We are often pushed to striking due to a hospital systems unwillingness to pay fair market wages in order to recruit and retain experienced staff. There is absolute moral distress that is experienced due to having to give inadequate care to our patient's because of unsafe staffing and lack of resources. We, the nurses, and healthcare workers continue to carry moral injury because hospitals continue to say they cannot afford to provide us with the bare minimum. We want to be able to give care that Oregonians expect when going to hospitals in their own communities.

Research published in the American Journal of Infection Control found that temporary

nurses are associated with higher rates of hospital-acquired infections, a clear indication that replacing permanent staff leads to lower quality care and potential harm to patients. (Source: HealthManagement.org)

During strikes, hospitals choose to spend money to bring in replacement workers at more than 2x the pay of permanent staff. They also over-staff all units for the duration of the strike. Paying exorbitant amounts in the millions, instead of doing what it would take to relieve their nurses of moral injury and burn-out.

During the recent Providence hospital strike in Oregon, it was reported that Providence spent approximately \$25.39 million per week on replacement nurses—\$1,400 per replacement nurse per day. (Source: Oregon Nurses Association).

HB 2792 does not serve to punish these institutions, it serves to hold them accountable in how they choose to spend taxpayer dollars. Being in support of this bill is not demonizing hospitals for hiring replacement workers. We as nurses understand that replacement workers are necessary during healthcare strikes to care for Oregonians. What this bill does, is make it very transparent to the general public and taxpayer, just how much hospitals are willing to spend on replacements, instead of investing it back into those who care for their community.

Thank you for your time and I look forward to your support.

Warmly,
Cynthia Vazquez BSN, RN