

TRAVIS NELSON
STATE REPRESENTATIVE
HOUSE DISTRICT 44
NORTH/NORTHEAST PORTLAND



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Testimony in Support of House Bill 2792

February 11, 2025

Chair Grayber, Vice Chair Munoz, Vice Chair Elmer, and members of the committee,

My name is Travis Nelson, State Representative for House District 44 - North and NE Portland. I am here today in support of House Bill 2792 because the state needs to know what our healthcare dollars are being spent on.

As we are all well aware, labor disputes and organizing efforts in the healthcare sector can cause tremendous strain on everyone in our communities. But when our frontline workers make the difficult decision to step away from what matters most to them—patient care—it's because they have run out of options. That choice is a clear signal that something is deeply wrong.

At the same time, hospitals often claim financial constraints while continuing to receive substantial public funding from the legislature. Yet, when our frontline workers go on strike, hospitals then turn around and spend significant sums on temporary staff to fill those gaps. But exactly how much are they willing to pay to get this temporary workforce? I have heard that replacement nurses can cost \$10,000 a week or more. Do the taxpayers have the right to know these costs? If taxpayer dollars are funding these institutions, transparency into these questions should be the bare minimum expectation.

HB 2792 would require hospitals to disclose what they spend on recruiting and paying temporary staff during strikes and lockouts. This is not about interfering in labor negotiations. This is about the public having visibility into how healthcare dollars are being spent and having accountability. This reported information would include recruitment, advertising, and compensation costs.

This transaction – of hospitals pleading financial hardship while diverting funds into costly, short-term labor solutions – lacks accountability and erodes trust. Do not get me wrong, I support the provider tax that is currently being debated and believe that we should provide financial support to our not-for-profit hospitals. However, I also believe that hospitals as one of our largest consumers of Medicaid dollars should allow the taxpayers to follow the money. That said, as both policymakers and stewards of public trust, I urge your support for HB 2792 to help ensure transparency and accountability, which will lead to better decision-making, and ultimately, better care for Oregonians. Thank you.

Sincerely,

State Representative Travis Nelson
House District 44, North/NE Portland