



Testimony in Support of the Dash 1 Amendment to House Bill 2249

Chair Grayber, Vice Chairs Elmer and Munoz, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Matt Swanson, and I am here on behalf of the 85,000 members of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) in Oregon. Our members provide essential care in home and community-based settings, skilled nursing facilities, and acute care hospitals.

Across these care settings, chronic staffing shortages are straining the ability to provide quality care, leading to burnout and high turnover. To build a stronger, more resilient health care workforce, we need more tools in our toolbox—and expanding apprenticeships is one critical solution. That's why we are proud to support House Bill 2249 with the dash 1 amendment. We also appreciate that work that Chair Grayber has done to bring this issue forward.

Why This Bill Matters

Data from the Oregon Employment Department highlights the urgency:

- 224,000 health care and social service workers will be needed by 2033.
- In health care, there will be eight replacement openings for every new job added.
- 55% of health care jobs require postsecondary training—higher than most other industries.

What HB 2249 Does

This bill establishes the Task Force on Health Care Apprenticeships and Career Pathways, tasked with identifying and addressing barriers to licensure, accreditation, and apprenticeships.

Key Provisions:

Composition: The Governor will appoint 11 members, including representatives from state agencies, labor unions, employers, and health care providers.

Responsibilities:

- Identify barriers to apprenticeships and career mobility.
- Recommend ways to credit prior learning and apprenticeships across care settings.
- Expand apprenticeships for certified alcohol and drug counselors, CNAs, dental assistants, medical assistants, and surgical technologists.

Operations:

- The Oregon Health Authority will provide staff support.

- The task force will consult experts and may adopt rules as needed.
- Members will serve as volunteers with no compensation.

Reporting & Sunset:

- A final report with legislative recommendations is due by September 15, 2026.
- The task force expires on December 31, 2026.

Addressing the Structural Challenges of Apprenticeship in Health Care

While apprenticeships are widely used in construction and manufacturing, health care training has historically relied on traditional certification and licensing pathways, often excluding apprenticeship models. As a result, regulations, curriculum, and industry standards were not designed with apprenticeships in mind.

Yet, apprenticeship provides a proven, effective model for building a sustainable workforce—one that allows workers to earn while they learn and move into high-demand health care jobs.

For this model to succeed, Oregon must take an intentional approach to integrating apprenticeships into the health care sector. This requires the expertise of the Bureau of Labor and Industries, Oregon Health Authority, the Oregon State Board of Nursing, the Higher Education Coordinating Commission, and industry stakeholders to create a framework that aligns apprenticeships with health care career pathways.

We also know that success will depend on the ability of labor and management to prioritize partnerships that support apprenticeships. The most successful apprenticeship programs in Oregon thrive on the shared commitment from labor and management.

A Collaborative Path Forward

We welcome constructive feedback to refine the task force's composition and scope. If there are reasonable amendments that enhance this bill's effectiveness, we are eager to collaborate to ensure its success.

We urge the committee to support HB 2249 to expand career pathways, strengthen Oregon's health care workforce, and improve patient care.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I am happy to answer any questions.