

March 7, 2025

To: Oregon Senate Committee on Health Care

Re: Senate Bill 529 - Relating to community health

To the Honorable Chair Patterson and members of the Oregon Senate Committee on Health Care

I am writing in support of Senate Bill 529.

My name is Mohammad Asif Waziri. I am a resident of Linn County, Oregon. My life experiences in the health care field and my personal challenges with mental illness and incarceration place me in a unique position to serve people with similar difficulties in their lives. I am a kind and compassionate person who cares deeply about individuals suffering in society. I would love to serve those in need.

Originally, I am from Pakistan and am blessed to be living freely and legally in the United States. My family first arrived in America in 1981. Subsequently I went to medical school in Pakistan and came back to the United States in 1995 as a physician. I worked in the medical career field in Pakistan and in the state of Missouri as an internal medicine specialist and emergency room physician for nearly ten years.

Mental illness runs in our family. I was diagnosed and began treatment in 2004. I continued to work as an emergency room physician, but treatment prescribed was unconventional and was ineffective. The stress and long hours took an additional toll on my mental health and my wife ultimately filed for divorce and took our children to the east coast. All of this triggered a relapse, and I physically assaulted a man after an argument. I was arrested and charged for my crime and was sentenced to two months in county jail and five years' probation in Missouri. I was released from probation after two and a half years because of good behavior and lack of any violation of the probationary stipulations. My criminal record in Missouri was eventually cleared, however, my medical license was permanently revoked, and I lost my ability to practice medicine in the United States. Since then, I have taken a variety of odd jobs to survive. I was compliant with medical treatment for several years, but in 2017, I could not afford my medications. I suffered a relapse, and unable to reason properly, I was charged with interstate stalking of my ex-girlfriend when I perceived our child was at risk. I pled guilty to the charges and was sentenced to four years in prison along with three years' probation. I completed my prison and probation sentences without any complications or violation of any stipulations.

I am sharing this information because I would like to emphasize how positive of an impact Faith Community Nursing has had in my life. When I first encountered Faith Community nurses who had been working voluntarily, in 2017, I was manic, homeless, and without a support system. Faith nurses helped me with finding safe and stable housing and guided me in developing my professional career. After release from prison, with the guidance of these nurses, I eventually have evolved and settled in the role of a client services advocate and have completed the certification course for community health workers in Oregon. Today, I am blessed and honored to serve those members of

the community who are the most vulnerable: the homeless and those suffering in need. Without the help of the Faith Community nurses, I would most likely be in prison. Moreover, I would be in full relapse of my mental illness. I would also like to emphasize, that the core issue I encounter serving in my current job, is the lack of spiritual care which hinders the ability of many of our clients to achieve stable and productive lives in which they can progress towards hope and joy.

In my humble opinion, it is imperative that SB529 be passed. The Faith Community nurses deserve incentives and resources to pursue their holy missions in their churches and beyond. They are called to a mission of service, and it deserves our utmost respect and gratitude.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to testify. God Bless!

Sincerely,

Mohammad Asif Waziri

Lebanon, Oregon