

Submitter: William Erickson

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Health Care

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB4074

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment and I am in strong opposition of this bill.

HB 4074 is a dangerous undoing of the progress we have made to care for patients in Oregon more safely. The significant step we took to regulate hospital staffing to a decent standard, HB 2697, was passed in 2023 as a consensus bill. HB 4074 amounts to the shocking idea of returning us to a pre-2697 system. To embrace HB 4074 would be to turn our backs on healthcare workers and patients across the state. Strong staffing laws — and their real enforcement — are tied to improved patient outcomes, and they make healthcare work sustainable.

We all agree that every Oregonian who needs hospital care should find staffing conditions that can best contribute to their healing. And every Oregonian deserves caregivers and clinicians who are protected against burnout and moral injury. These themes were advanced in HB 2697, and reversing them betrays Oregon values.

HB 4074 proposes to allow hospitals off the hook in their responsibility to the community and their employees. It would allow hospitals to self-attest that they complied with the staffing law. It would narrow who the hospital must inform when a deviation from a staffing plan occurs.

The bill caps fines, eliminates penalties for failing to adopt staffing plans, takes away agency authority to suspend/revoke the licenses of hospitals that are in violation, and contains delays in enforcement out to 2030. This is a recipe for disaster when it comes to seeing Oregon staffing levels improve or even stabilize.

I am fortunate to work on a unit that has a good staffing plan, but the units that I send my patients to need to have the same protections. Our small rural hospitals that are dealing with fewer resources need to be given the opportunity to give the safest care possible. These are our community members.