



Testimony in Support of House Bills HB 3011 and HB 3016

February 23, 2021

House Committee on Health Care

Lynda Pond, RN

Good afternoon Chair Prusak, Vice Chairs Salinas and Hayden, and members of the committee. My name is Lynda Pond. I am the Board President for the Oregon Nurses Association (ONA). We represent 15,000 registered nurses and professional members, and the Nurse Practitioners of Oregon. I have been a practicing nurse in Oregon for 34 years. ONA stands in solidarity with our members and in strong support of HB 3011, which would appropriately resource the OHA to ensure provisions of Oregon's nurse staffing law are fulfilled, of HB 3016, which would update nurse staffing law processes under executive order.

Our nurse members, statewide, have consistently rated nurse staffing issues as their number one priority during each legislative session. These issues challenge our members' ability to care for their patients and for themselves. We hear these concerns, in varying degrees, regardless of practice specialty or geographic location in the state. And when our members' concerns remain unaddressed and when their voices go unheard, those concerns come to ONA. As the executive leading the organization, their challenges and frustrations become mine. HB 3011 and HB 3016 stem from persistent yet solvable nursing issues. I am here today to seek a remedy for my nurses, Oregon's nursing workforce.

Our members are in unanimous support of HB 3011 which was introduced last session, HB 4032 of 2020. It was supported by the legislature, OHA, and OAHHS and was positioned for a final passage vote but was deferred due to the abbreviated session. This bill would fund the Nurse Staffing Program, within the OHA, to ensure our current law is resourced to provide technical support, site inspection, staffing plan review and, if necessary, levy penalties for noncompliance. Despite their best efforts, current OHA staff are unable to meet the letter and intent of laws that this body put in place. The lack of appropriate funding reflects poorly on the State, as a willing accomplice to these ongoing violations, and sends a strong negative message to our nurses. Support for HB 3011 shouldn't be optional. It is necessary for the State's compliance and we urge your support.

HB 3016 addresses Oregon's staffing plan suspension during an emergency order. From March 2020 through early winter, our office was inundated with calls, emails, and IMs from members demanding answers and assurances that we couldn't give them, and that their employers wouldn't give them. We tried desperately to quell their fears. We tried to offer grace to employers whose lack of preparedness and appropriate resources, literally, put our members lives in danger. Our members wanted collaboration on working conditions, containment efforts, and financial supports. They needed to know that they were as important as their facility's financial stability. Days turned into weeks turned into months turned into nearly a year. We and our nurses have spent nearly a year fighting for a collaborative space to get answers and problem solve. The additional stress and trauma our nurses have endured is incalculable and enduring. HB 3016 creates a predictable process for problem-solving and collaboration that puts nurses, facilities, communities, and our state in a better position to address our next emergency. It commits a 90-day timeline to develop a contingency plan that respects nursing expertise and incorporates the perspectives of those who are putting their lives on the line, to keep all of us safe, our nurses.

For months now we have heard how much our sacrifices are appreciated. We've read the news stories and witnessed the public statements. We've heard the taglines and hashtags. What Oregon nurses want more than anything are the protections HB 3011 and HB 3016 provide. **We urge a YES vote and unanimous passage.**