Resolution to improve nurse staffing in Oregon

Whereas, the Oregon Nurses Association (ONA) acknowledges that nursing is in a staffing crisis and,

Whereas, the current staffing crisis is the result of a decades long strategy by healthcare systems to underfund nursing and,

Whereas, the effects of the COVID pandemic exacerbated issues of nurse staffing shortages and,

Whereas, nurses are currently leaving the profession at unprecedented rates and,

Whereas, it is well documented that inadequate nurse staffing leads to moral distress among nurses and,

Whereas, 22 years after ONA first passed a nurse staffing law staffing is at its worst and,

Whereas, ONA recognizes that hospitals have willfully evaded adherence to Oregon’s nurse staffing law and,

Whereas, ONA acknowledges that the Oregon Health authority (OHA) has not lived up to its responsibility to regulate the law and,

Whereas, ONA has reviewed the Nurse Staffing Advisory Board minutes to reveal that ONA members have advised the OHA of continued and worsening compliance, by hospitals, to the staffing law and,

Whereas, ONA members have also advised the OHA that nurses are experiencing increasing fatigue and “burnout” due to inadequate staffing and,

Whereas, nursing shortages impact patient care in severe and adverse ways and,

Whereas, ONA’s Strategic Vision and Mission includes advocating for patients. Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, that ONA will commit to re-evaluating the current approach to nurse staffing and, be it further

Resolved, that ONA will begin to explore a nurse: patient ratio model that will empower our members and protect our patients and be it further

Resolved, that ONA will evaluate ways to ensure better enforcement of nurse staffing law(s) and be it further

Resolved, that ONA will use its legislative power to advocate for better staffing and better pay for nurses and be it further
Resolved, that ONA will explore legislation and public policy to increase funding sources for loan forgiveness for nurse caring for all nurses caring for underserved and rural populations and be it further

Resolved, that ONA will continue to find ways to support the mental health of nurses including programs like the Oregon Wellness Program and be it further

Resolved, that ONA will support legislation and rules that allow nurses at all practice levels to practice at the top of their scope and license.

Supporting Statements on Resolution to improve nurse wellbeing in Oregon.

“For too long, organizations have disregarded nurse advocacy for patient safety over a dollar. Investing in nurses and patient safety will undoubtedly reap greater profit than the high-risk liabilities organizations are placing themselves in today.” – Angela Powell, Cabinet on Education

“As a member of ONA Cabinet on Practice and Research, I believe nurses in every health care and educational setting have paid the ultimate price in patients' care during the pandemic and continue to do so, owing to lack of value by most employers. It is the collective voice of nurses that must tip the scales to balance the enormous employer profit and multiple inequities in nursing. What happens in nursing happens in the public health of all people and communities.” – Linda Bifano, Cabinet on Nursing Practice and Research

“Nurse staffing has been an issue that has been heightened by the effects of the pandemic. It is time to act and impress upon those who regulate the law to enforce appropriate nurse-to-patient ratios for the future of nursing and our patients.” – Amy Blankenship, Cabinet on Education, Chair

“Resolution to improve nurse staffing in Oregon: Improving the profit margins for too long has come at a cost to nursing and has undermined the patient care we know our patients need. We have been flayed over time to a barebones state of staffing and cannot ignore the state we are in. We require investments, support, consideration, and above all, we deserve accountability.” – Lace Velk, Cabinet on Nursing Practice and Research and Cabinet on Human Rights and Ethics, Chair