Statement by ONA President Katy Cooper on Passage of Updates to Oregon’s Nurse Staffing Law (SB 469)

June 26, 2015 – “Today I join my colleagues at the Oregon Nurses Association in applauding the legislature for passage of Senate Bill 469, which strengthens Oregon’s Nurse Staffing Law. Staffing has a huge impact on our ability as nurses to provide the high quality patient care that all Oregon patients and their families expect and deserve. When our patients need us and there is not enough staff, all nurses worry ‘will I get there in time?’

Passage of SB 469 will improve our staffing law, ensuring that patients can get the high quality nursing care they expect and deserve.

It builds on Oregon’s work to support nurses as the expert – the decision makers about staffing. Registered Nurses have the clinical expertise to evaluate and prioritize the needs of our patients, and we are uniquely positioned to make decisions about appropriate levels of nurse staffing.

The new law will continue to rely on nurses’ specialized knowledge and experience to build staffing plans that prioritize patient care and safety. In addition, it will increase state oversight, and make sure that if there is a problem with staffing, a quick resolution is found.

We commend the Oregon Legislature for passing SB 469 and we look forward to continuing our work to ensure Oregon’s patients receive the best and safest care possible.”

ONA President Katy Cooper, BSN, RN, CCRN

Background:

Oregon was one of the first states in the nation to adopt a nurse staffing law that is built on a collaborative staffing committee model in 2001. In the collaborative model, direct-care nurses
and nurse managers work together to establish staffing plans for their facilities. SB 469, which passed the Oregon House on June 25, after a unanimous vote in the Senate last week, strengthens the current law and makes important changes that empower nurses on staffing committees, improve state oversight and enforcement and increase transparency.

Key changes to the law include:

- Clarifying that hospital nurse staffing committees’ plans must be implemented by hospitals
- Creating a more thorough review process for staffing plans
- Establishing reasonable limits on the use of mandatory overtime
- Publicly posting information about the law and how to report violations on all hospital units
- Creating a statewide advisory board to study staffing trends and make recommendations to the state
- Establishing a mediation process to resolve staffing committee disagreements
- Increasing state-led audits of hospitals’ compliance with the staffing law

ONA was founded in 1904 as the professional association for nurses in Oregon. It is a nonprofit association and a labor union representing registered nurses. ONA’s mission is to advocate for nursing and quality health care.

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