The Oregon Nurses Association is Oregon’s oldest and largest union and professional association for nurses. ONA is proud to represent over 15,000 Oregon nurses. From school-based health centers and emergency rooms, to public health departments and nurse practitioner-run clinics, ONA members are on the front lines of our health care system. ONA works to support policies that ensure the best working conditions for nurses, and the best health care for our patients and equality for all. ONA members and the Cabinet on Health Policy has identified the following as legislative priorities for the 2019 legislative session.

**Healthcare Worker Safety:** Nurses and other health care workers routinely confront workplace violence with national data indicating that incidents of serious workplace violence—those requiring days off for an injured worker to recover—were four times more common in healthcare than in all other private industry settings\(^1\). This ultimately results in missed patient care, decreased recruitment and retention rates, increased employee absenteeism as well as added costs to the system due to turnover and workers compensation claims. ONA’s proposal aims to improve workplace safety protocols and ensure stronger protections of workers by expanding access to data and review of required assault incident reporting, enhancing awareness of patients with a history of violent incidents, ensuring retaliation protections for employees who report incidents and enabling implementation of increased hospital security personnel, where appropriate and necessary.

**State revenue and health care systems reform:** Our state has long been grappling with how to secure adequate revenue to make robust investments in critical services that our communities have long needed; including funding affordable access to care for all, K-12, public health and higher education. ONA will support efforts to sustainably fund Medicaid and invest in education and other wrap-around services that have a tremendous impact on overall health. We will also look towards ways to achieve universal access to health care.

**Paid Family and Medical Leave:** Although the physical and mental health benefits of being able to take care of a sick loved one or new child are clear, only 15% of workers have access to job-protected and dedicated Paid Family and Medical Leave. As part of a broad coalition of Labor and advocacy groups, we are proposing a statewide insurance program to be funded through small contributions by employers and employees. Covering upwards of 90% of Oregon’s workers, these contributions would be pooled together so that workers could access progressive wage replacement based on their salary for up to 12 to 14 weeks of paid leave.

**Public Sector Worker Protections:** ONA is working closely with other Labor partners to maintain and strengthen standards that will continue to ensure the rights of employees to organize effectively and participate actively in unions representing public sector workplaces across the state. On the heels of the recent Supreme Court Janus v. AFSCME decision, this initiative would help assure the continued ability to engage with new employees, as well as enable timely opportunities to present information about the union in their workplace.

**High Cost Prescription Drugs:** Prescription drug prices are the fastest growing part of the health care system, meaning that it is increasingly challenging for our patients to receive the treatment they need.

\(^1\) Bureau of Labor Statistics data for intentional injuries caused by humans, excluding self-inflicted injuries
Between 2008 and 2015 the price of brand-name drugs in the US increased by 164 percent.² In coalition with other healthcare stakeholders, ONA recommends a variety of ways to lower costs, including importing drugs from other areas, advanced notice of price increases, price disclosure in advertising and mandatory substitutions of generics.

**Youth Tobacco and Nicotine Prevention:** Every year, over 7,000 Oregonians die as a result of tobacco use and we spend over $1.4 billion on tobacco related medical care annually.³ ONA proposes several solutions to help address this problem, including increasing the tax on tobacco products to bring us in line with our neighboring states, creating a tax for e-cigarettes, and making sure we protect the Indoor Clear Air Act, which keeps public accommodations free from any kind of smoke or vapor.

**Other Priorities**

- **Safe Nurse Staffing Administrative Rules Clean-Up:** During our policy summit this past summer, ONA membership made it clear that implementation of our current staffing law was not living up to expectations or its legislative intent. In response to this clear mandate for accountability, we intend to advocate for rule-making that clarifies conflicting interpretations of our existing statute and limits the number of times a plan of correction can be submitted before penalties attach. In addition, we will continue to empower and educate members on their rights under current law and will be hosting a solution-focused policy forum this summer to obtain a consensus from our members that will shape our subsequent legislative ask.

- **Addressing Nurse Practitioner Barriers/Fluoroscopy:** APRNs are seeking to obtain practice parity which would enable them to supervise fluoroscopic procedures, ensuring greater access and provider choice for Oregon patients. The proposed law would require similar educational, clinical and certification qualifications as PAs currently supervising such procedures.

- **Addressing Workplace Harassment:** Today, at least one in four women report having experienced sexual harassment at work⁴, while 94% of employees experiencing harassment do not file a formal complaint.⁵ The Oregon Workplace Fairness Act would prevent employers from asking for nondisclosure agreements that relate to discrimination at the time of hiring, and during settlement and severance negotiations. The proposal also creates individual liability for owners and employer executive officers when sexual harassment has occurred and goes unaddressed in workplaces.

- **Nurse Home Visiting Programs:** Home visiting programs where nurses make pre and post-natal visits to some of the most vulnerable Oregon families have proven to improve health outcomes for babies and new mothers. This is an upstream public health investment that’s critical to maintain and expand in the coming biennia.

- **Addressing social determinants of health:** ONA nurses are acutely aware that the whole health of a patient is dependent on so much more than their health insurance. Whether its stable access to safe housing, providing wrap-around supports like nurses and behavioral health professionals in school, or making sure key stakeholders are making real investments in their community, ONA is committed to working on several concepts this session that will ultimately make our communities healthier.

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² Tough Pill to Swallow- The High Price of Prescription Drugs in the US, Institute for Health and Socio-Economic Policy, September 27 2016.
³ Oregon Tobacco Fact Sheet, 2014. Oregon Health Authority Public Health Division Tobacco Prevention and Education.
⁵ https://fairygodboss.com/articles/sexual-harassment-statistics

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