



## **Testimony in Support of SB 1040**

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Senate Committee on Workforce

Chris Hewitt

ONA represents nearly 15,000 nurses throughout the state, providing care in almost every setting of our health care industry imaginable—staff nurses in large and small hospitals, school-based health centers, and local public health departments. Over two thirds of our members work in the private sector.

Oregon has long lead the nation with regard to nursing practice and standards—for registered nurses and advance practice nurses alike. For more than a century, ONA members have exercised their collective voice to help improve working conditions for all nurses and promote the very best health care for patients in across our communities.

However, nurses are not immune from the deliberate attacks that aim to both weaken this shared voice and limit the ability to advocate for safe patient care. So-called “right to work” laws have continually resulted in adverse consequences for our workforce in other areas of the country. From reducing median wages and eroding baseline industry safety standards to heightening infant mortality rates and decreasing access to employer health care, these policies remain a danger for patients and working families.<sup>1</sup>

ONA is also concerned more broadly about the increasingly prevalent anti-worker strategies we witness being orchestrated to undermine our unions, and believe strongly that the nursing sector is more fair and worker-centered today as a result of robust collective bargaining rights.

Enabling a patchwork of disparate regional attacks on labor unions is likely to induce nurses leaving certain areas to seek work in places where standards are higher and where they have a stronger voice on the job. This would stand as an impediment to our health care system in a time when many rural areas already struggle with access to a qualified provider workforce.

Oregon should set the floor as it relates to standards—local communities should be encouraged to strengthen protections, not weaken them. SB 1040 is an important and common sense opportunity to help ensure both workers and employers can maintain consistency on the state level in terms of negotiating union security agreements.

**ONA urges your support for SB 1040.**

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<sup>1</sup>*“Working Hard to Make Indiana Look Bad”*. Economic Policy Institute. Lafer. <http://www.epi.org/publication/working-hard-indiana-bad-tortured-uphill/>. Jan. 3, 2012.