

June 7, 2021

Superintendent Dolly Matteucci

Oregon State Hospital
2600 Center Street NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

Dear Superintendent, Matteucci:

On May 27th, 2021, the Oregon State Hospital Advisory Board received an email from you to update us on the hospital's efforts to address the staffing shortage. After exhausting all other options, you stated that you asked hospital managers and supervisors from targeted work areas to sign up for weekend shifts. We also understand that the Department of Administrative Services forwarded the same request to other state agencies under the Oregon Health Authority umbrella.

During our May 20th, 2021 regular Board meeting, you presented similar information. During that meeting, it was never mentioned the hospital was close to requesting support from the National Guard, only that there were discussions with State Emergency Operations Center and National Guard should it *become necessary* to deploy additional staff.

That meeting would have been the perfect environment to discuss what engaging the National Guard would look like for the hospital. Your email to us on May 27th gave us no indication things had escalated. A few hours after receiving your email, we learned through the Oregonian, parents, and other concerned citizens of the hospital's plan to move forward.

As Board members, we are expected to fulfill our charge, which includes making recommendations to the hospital regarding administrative rules, policies, procedures, and hospital protocols related to patients' safety, security, and care. We were not allowed to do that in this instance.

It is essential to mention that staffing or, rather, lack of staffing is not a new issue. We understand that the hospital has lost hundreds of floor staff since the new hospital opening (in 2011), and the required numbers to work the floor has dropped. This is not just a Covid related concern. Staffing is and will continue to be an issue after the current emergency has passed unless measures are taken to root out the causes and devise a long-term solution.

We appreciate the burden Covid-19 has put on the administration. We sympathize with staff who are overworked and exhausted and the strain that puts on the safety and security of both patients and staff. We understand that sometimes decisions need to be made quickly due to the urgency presented. We are aware that hiring nursing staff from outside agencies can be costly and are not questioning the need for action; however, since the action has been taken, it raises several questions.

- 1) Update on the expected return of staff on leave.
- 2) The average amount of time off by department.
- 3) Does the hospital track the turnover in staff? In other words, could we receive data on the number of staff who are no longer working at OSH as well as the number of new hires each month?
- 4) What are the qualifications of the National Guard troops to work in a psychiatric hospital?
- 5) What is the hospital doing to address the increased violence in the hospital?
- 6) How will the National Guard troops support this effort?

We look forward to your timely response.

Sincerely

Oregon State Hospital Advisory Board

Javonnie Shearn, Chair