High court won't revive school's transgender bathroom ban

BY DENISE LAVOIE AND MARK SHERMAN Associated Press

Nurses

Continued from A1

The U.S. Supreme Court on Monday rejected a Virginia school board's appeal to reinstate its transgender bath-room ban, handing a victory to transgender rights groups and a former high school student

"I've been here eight years,

and I've never seen this many acutely ill patients coming

Mary Tanski, interim chair of

the OHSU Emergency Depart-

through the door," said Dr.

ment. "When we see sicker patients, that's a stress. Nurses

were already tired. They've

been at the front lines for a

sion."

demic.

prise.

flux.

Trafficjam

year. It's to the point that we

have seen some of our nursing colleagues leave the profes-

When COVID-19 arrived in

Oregon, many hospitals expe-

rienced an immediate drop in

business. In the first months of

the pandemic, OHSU's emer-

gency department saw patient

could afford to cut staff, save

some money and lessen the

taking as a result of the pan-

financial pounding they were

But ER traffic is hard to pre-

dict. By law, they don't have the

luxury of turning people away.

Sure enough, ER demand

surged this spring to a level

that caught everyone by sur-

After studiously avoiding

hospitals and doctors' offices

for a year due to COVID-19,

many of the patients are too

sick to be treated and released.

That has led to another prob-

lem: Some hospitals don't have

enough staffed beds elsewhere

in the hospital to house the in-

practice of holding patients in

the ER, until a hospital bed or

some other destination can be

found. The practice is contro-

versial because it keeps patients

in limbo and because it blocks

the normal flow of sick patients

into the hospital. Behavioral

health patients are particularly

prone to boarding because of

That leads to "boarding," the

Some hospitals figured they

volume fall by half.

who fought in court for six years to overturn the ban.

After learning that the high court refused to hear the board's appeal, Gavin Grimm, now 22, said that his long battle is over. "We won," he tweeted. "Honored to have been part of this victory," he added.

Grimm was a 15-year-old

student at Gloucester High School when he was banned from using the boys bathroom. The Gloucester County School Board's policy required Grimm to use restrooms that corresponded with his biological sex — female — or private bathrooms. Grimm filed a federal lawsuit that wound its way through the courts for six years. Grimm said that being

forced to use the nurse's room, a private bathroom and the girl's restroom was humiliating and severely interfered with his education. He said he is heartened by his victory in court because "a win in Virginia is a win everywhere."

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DATED and first pub-lished on June 15,

2021 Jeffrey A. Mornarich, OSB #935291 DOLE COALWELL

Of Attorneys for Per-sonal Representa-This is a full-time positive

Legal Notice NOTICE TO INTER-ESTED PERSONS ^pamela J. Stuemke has been appoint-ed Administrator of ed Administrator of the estate of Carol Kay Tomlinson, de-ceased, by the Cir-cuit Court, State of Oregon, Deschutes County, Case No. 21PB05132. All per-sons having claims against the setate against the estate are required to present them, with vouchers attached, to the Administrator at 204 SE Miller Ave, Bend, OR 97702, within four months after the date of June 29, 2021, the first publication of this notice, or the claim may be barred. Additional informa



Allen J. Schaben/Los Angeles Times, file

Nurse Stephanie Scott keeps an eye on patients in the emergency department at St. Joseph's Hospital in Orange, California, in 2018.

nurses," she said. "We are mental health counselors; we are hospital nurses; we are being asked to do it all, with no extra help."

Nowhere to divert

The problem is more than just a shortage of skilled workers and staffed hospital beds.

Emergency responders are delivering patient loads that are too much for hospital emergency rooms to handle. The surge of calls began several months ago and only worsened in the last two months.

Emergency calls always spike in the summer as more people are on the roads. In Multnomah County, the number would typically increase to about 300 a day. This month, the county is running on average 390 a day.

When Portland-area hospital ERs are jammed, they go on "divert" status, meaning ambulances that would normally go there are diverted to another hospital. It's never been unusual for one or two metro-area hospitals to get overa spokesman for Metro West Ambulance, which serves Washington County. This May, all hospitals were diverted 54% of the time.

Ambulances have made some unusual trips in response. Tualatin Valley Fire & Rescue had to transport a patient to a hospital in Corvallis after Portland-area hospitals turned them away, said Cassandra Ulven, spokeswoman for the department.

The deluge of shootings and other street violence has contributed to the surge.

"Our trauma volume is huge," said Jon Jui, medical director of Multnomah County Emergency Medical Services. 'We've never seen people getting shot at this rate, often at random. I've been doing EMS for over three decades, and I've never seen problems this sustained, this prolonged. We have a very significant strain on our emergency system."

Slow to staff up

Kaiser and Providence nurses argue the solution to the problem is simple: Hospitals need to hire more staff, and they need to retain the talent they have.

acy all declined to provide any information about nurse attrition or turnover. Kaiser said it is hiring so-

called traveling nurses from employment agencies to fill the gaps in its own payroll, and it's offering sign-on bonuses for registered nurses who will work nights in the ER.

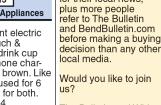
'The nursing shortage affecting the whole nation is impacting the Northwest region as well," said Kaiser spokeswoman Debbie Karman. "We're actively working to recruit and hire nursing staff."

Hoffart, the Kaiser nurse, suggested Kaiser should concentrate on retaining its trained veterans. Attrition is enormous. "She and her colleagues estimate that half or more of the nurses who worked in the Kaiser Sunnyside ER last year have left the department."

Hoffart is a steward for the nurse's union, the Oregon Federation of Nurses and Health Professionals, which started negotiating a new contract early this month. Staffing is a central issue.

Kim Stewart, another ER nurse at Kaiser Sunnyside, said there's no bigger priority.

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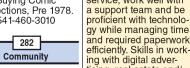
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the chronic shortage of beds d to their needs

The backlog of boarded patients means more delays for new ER patients, who can wait hours to see a nurse. Understandably angry patients and their families at times lash out at hospital staff.

Karlee Hoffart is a four-year veteran of the ER at Kaiser Permanente Sunnyside Medical Center in Clackamas. "I love the emergency department," she said. "I'm a bit of an adrenaline junkie. I like being a valued member of a small team."

But things have changed in recent months.

"We cannot move our patients," she said. "There are days when I start a shift, half of our beds are taken up by folks needing a hospital bed. Sometimes, they can wait 24 hours."

In the interim, it is Hoffart and her colleagues who must treat them.

"We are no longer just ER

whelmed on a busy night.

But in recent months it's become almost a daily occurrence for every hospital in the area to go on divert.

OHSŬ, for example, spent about 150 hours per month in divert status in April and May 2020. A year later, Tanski confirmed, OHSU's emergency department was full and off-limits between 450 and 500 hours per month.

OHSU is one of the region's key trauma hospitals that takes the most serious cases.

"When we're on divert it presents a challenge," Tanski said. "It just leads to this spiral effect."

That is a sea change for local county officials who run a sort of air-traffic control system coordinating ambulances with hospitals. In May of last year, all local hospitals went on total divert status maybe once or twice, said Shane Ryan,

Hospital officials said they are trying to do exactly that.

"No one would dispute that this is a challenging time across the state, region and country when it comes to caregiver staffing, going on divert and wait times in emergency departments," Providence spokesman Gary Walker said. "Providence is actively managing the needs, including spending hundreds of hours in recruiting additional caregivers. We are excited to have a group of 54 new nurses joining us for ED residency in a couple of weeks."

Legacy Health Systems said it has hired more than 250 nurses in 2021 and will soon accept 50 additional nurses into its residency program. Providence, Kaiser and Leg"Kaiser has a great patient care model," Stewart said. "But without the people there to do it right, it doesn't work. I don't even want more money or more benefits. I just want staff."

Lail, the Providence Portland nurse who recently went on leave, echoes those sentiments. He is a steward in his union, the Oregon Nurses Association, which recently filed a grievance with Providence over staffing issues that was signed by 75% of its nursing staff.

Lail doesn't know what his future has in store. "I don't want to quit, I don't want to leave. But it's getting really hard," he said. "The money is really not that important to me. I just want the support and the right co-workers to do my job."

Wyden

Continued from A1

"I believe what we will hear about is making sure there are personnel available in the West to fight multiple fires at the same time. This is a departure from the past. Usually we have one big fire and other western states would chip in to help the state that was hit the hardest. Now, we are talking about something that is unprecedented: Big fires simultaneously throughout the West."

Wyden led the committee for about one year, from 2013 to 2014, when he took over the tax-writing Finance Committee, which he now leads again after Democrats became the Senate's majority party with Vice President Kamala Harris the tie-breaker in a 50-50 chamber.

Wyden continues to sit on the Energy and Natural Resources Committee as the No. 2 Democrat behind Chairman Joe Manchin of West Virginia. Senate rules allow one committee chairmanship per member.

Budget details are decided by the Appropriations Committee; Oregon Sen. Jeff Merklev leads the subcommittee that oversees the Forest Service.

Wyden spoke on a weekend when temperatures exceeded 100 in virtually all of Oregon, and drought affects most of the state.

Wyden and Merkley toured Oregon twice in the aftermath of the 2020 Labor Day wildfires, which affected all four metropolitan areas on the westside - Portland, Salem, Eugene and Medford — with

wildfire smoke or worse. (The Almeda Fire swept through communities south of Medford and destroyed an estimated 2,500 homes, the largest concentrated loss statewide.)

Wildfires also burned on the central coast, Central Oregon and near Roseburg and Grants Pass.

Wyden says he expects one element of the response plan to be cooperation among the agencies responsible for fighting forest fires. "Local, state and federal firefighters are going to be tightly coordinated in order to deal with this grave threat," he said.

In Oregon, that responsibility is divided among fire protection districts, Oregon Department of Forestry - which also contracts to protect Western Oregon forests overseen by the Bureau of Land Management — and the Forest Service for national forests.

Wyden said Congress should increase the amount of money available for the Forest Service to reduce hazardous-fuel buildups in national forests. Oregon itself has about 2 million acres eligible for treatment. Wyden said Forest Service chief Christiansen estimates it will take \$20 billion to eliminate the backlog.

Wyden also is promoting the creation of a 21st century equivalent of the Civilian Conservation Corps, the New Deal-era agency that put primarily young and unmarried men to work in the nation's forests between 1933 and 1942. Silver Falls State Park, east of Salem, is one of the CCC's legacies in Oregon. pwong@pamplinmedia.com



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