

Testimony in support of SB 132

Respectfully Submitted by Joe Baessler, Political Director Oregon AFSCME

Dear Chair Monnes Anderson and members of Senate Health Care Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on SB 132. Oregon AFSCME represent hospital workers all over the state from our largest local union at Oregon Health Science University to one of our smallest at good Shepard Hospital in Hermiston Oregon. Worker safety is one of the key founding principles of AFSCME and the protection of workers from harm is something we work on constantly. This bill will make it safer for our hospital workers by providing protections consistent with those provided to public transit operators, emergency medical services providers, youth corrections employees and taxi drivers. It will not stop all violence in the work place but it will reduce some of the violence in a hospital setting. There are those people that attack hospital workers that will know this is the law and will think twice before harming a hospital worker.

We know that this is the law in other states and our brother and sister unions in those states report less violent attacks. For our members who have worked in states with this protection, they report examples of how letting aggressive patients know of the penalty helps keep them from becoming physically violent. Our members believe that this sort of protection will help them and it is hard for our members to understand why other workers in non-medical fields are protected and they are not. It seems odd that those in transit to the hospital are held to a higher standard than those in the emergency room. Those that work in our hospitals have a difficult job as it is with constant staffing problems and long hours but we believe this would be an improvement for their working conditions.

It is for these reasons that we ask you to support this bill and create a safer environment in our hospitals.

Sincerely,

Joe Baessler

Political Director Oregon AFSCME