

Advocating for Oregon's Hospitals & the Patients They Serve

Committee: Senate Committee on Judiciary
Bill: SB 132A
From: Patty O'Sullivan, on behalf of OAHHS
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Senator Prozanski and members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary, on behalf of Oregon's 62 acute care hospitals and the patients they serve, the Oregon Association of Hospitals and Health Systems (OAHHS) appreciates the opportunity to comment on Senate Bill 132, regarding assaults against health care workers.

Oregon hospitals support this legislation, along with nurses and many labor interests. Attacks on frontline hospital workers have been escalating both in frequency and intensity in recent years, and this troubling trend needs to be addressed from several angles.

Meaningful legal consequences such as the approach proposed by SB 132 are important to discourage violent acts in care settings. Prevention is also a top priority. Oregon hospitals are individually investing significant resources into programs aimed at protecting workers, including training in de-escalation protocols, redesigning care spaces to minimize harm, implementing systems to alert staff to the presence of patients with a history of violence, and bolstering security presence. Under the auspices of OAHHS, hospitals are investing nearly \$50,000 in a workplace safety pilot that will bring an expert directly into a number of facilities to evaluate and enhance existing programs, and lay the foundation for creating sustainable, cultural change in how hospitals address violence in the workplace.

We must emphasize that SB 132 is not applicable to individuals who do not have the wherewithal to understand their actions. Pursuant to the statute this bill amends, individuals lacking mental capacity or awareness of their actions cannot form intent, and are therefore exempt from potential prosecution.

Hospital workers operate in a public service and public trust role that is on par with law enforcement and paramedics, and they deserve the same legal protections afforded to those who serve on the frontlines to care.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. We sincerely hope you will vote to support this important bill.