

Dear Chair Barker and Members of the Oregon House  
Committee on Judiciary,

Violence in healthcare is rampant and it is a problem. The Bureau of Labor Statistic states that violence in healthcare is almost 4 times the rate of violence of any business in the private sector, and it is climbing. It has been well-studied that healthcare violence is under-reported so it is expected that this incidence rate is much higher.



The Emergency Nurses Association's two-year Emergency Department Violence Surveillance Study (2011) showed that 54.5% of surveyed emergency nurses experienced physical assault and/or verbal abuse within a 7-day period of work.

Assaults on healthcare personnel can be frightening, debilitating, and career-ending. They interrupt the entire healthcare process, affect the safety of the patients and staff, and come with a great price of apprehension, fear, guilt, and pain.

We have been witness to discouragement from law enforcement, district attorneys, hospital administrators and judges. We have watched the lack of enforcement of current law. We have been hurt, we have bled, and we have been broken.

House Bill 2620 requests that assaults against hospital employees be considered a crime of assault in the third degree if the person intentionally, knowingly or recklessly causes physical injury.

We have been here before. In 2015, Oregon Senate Bill 132 asked the same of the Oregon Legislature however the bill died in committee. Since that time, Colorado, Utah, Georgia and Delaware have enhanced penalties for persons who would assault nurses in emergency departments. In total, 39 states have similar assault legislation for healthcare.

We need your help. We are working hard on our end to decrease violence in our hospitals through education, training and awareness. Many times, it is not enough. We ask that those who would intentionally, knowing and recklessly harm a hospital worker be held accountable for their actions.

The Oregon Emergency Nurses Association asks that you allow this bill to move forward and become Oregon law.

Thank you,

The Oregon ENA Board of Directors

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