

March 7, 2017

Oregon State Legislature
House Revenue Committee
900 Court St. NE
Salem Oregon 97301

Re: *House Bill 2620 – Relating to assault of persons working in hospitals*

Dear Chair Barker and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of Oregon’s 62 hospitals, health care systems, and the patients they serve, the Oregon Association of Hospitals and Health Systems (OAHHS) appreciates the opportunity to comment on HB 2620.

As members of this committee have rightly noted, attacks on frontline hospital workers have been escalating both in frequency and intensity. Hospitals value greatly their skilled and dedicated workforce and feel any attacks on them are both unacceptable and reprehensible. The bill before you today would help protect those workers, who should not fear physical harm during their work to heal people. OAHHS and its member hospitals have formally engaged in conversations on this topic for over a decade, but welcome this attention from the legislature, and believe this could have significant impact in reducing the incidence of this unacceptable violence. We support this bill.

It is important to note that hospitals are subject to the Oregon Safe Employment Act (654.412), which was established under House Bill 2022 (2007). It requires “health care employers”, including ambulatory surgical centers, hospitals, and home health care services to 1) Conduct periodic security and safety assessments to identify existing or potential hazards for assaults committed against employees, 2) Develop and implement an assault prevention and protection program for employees based on assessments, and 3) Provide assault prevention and protection training on a regular and ongoing basis for employees.

The Oregon Safe Employment Act also requires that they maintain a record of assaults committed against employees that occur on the premises. Records must be kept for a minimum of five years. Oregon OSHA provides instructions and a template for this “health care assault log.”

As part of reporting pilot within Oregon Safe Employment Act facilities were required to send data to Oregon OSHA for review during the 2008 calendar year. The response rate for this requirement was 100 percent. Oregon Safe Employment Act directed Oregon OSHA to analyze the data and report the findings to the legislature in April 2009. Of the 1061 assaults recorded during the 2008 calendar year, 99 percent of those occurred in a hospital, and 50 percent were in the behavioral health/psychiatric unit. The medical/surgical unit followed with 13 percent, and the emergency room with 11%. In almost all cases, the assailant was a patient. The majority of victims were identified either as certified nursing assistants, orderlies, or aides (42 percent), or as registered nurses or licensed practical nurses (32 percent). Most assaults resulted in a minor injury, including mild soreness, small bruising, and scratches (80 percent).

To address these unacceptable attacks on their workers, Oregon hospitals are individually investing significant resources into programs aimed at protecting workers. Many hospitals have invested in

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.

Through OAHHS, hospitals and partners have invested \$145,000 to date in a workplace safety pilot program to address workplace violence and safe patient handling. The pilot program is taking place in eight hospitals across the state. It brings an expert directly into facilities to evaluate and enhance existing programs, and to lay the foundation for creating sustainable, cultural change in how hospitals address violence in the workplace. The program will develop tools and resources to be made available to all hospitals once the pilot is complete. This pilot is being completed with the support and collaboration of SEIU and ONA.

As stated above, OAHHS and its member hospitals support HB 2620 and believe that it is a logical step towards reducing the violence perpetrated against hospital workers. Thank you for your consideration.