



Testimony on HB 2620

Melissa Pfeleger

March 7, 2017

I am a Registered nurse and an ONA member and I am writing in support of HB 2620 and the forthcoming amendment to create meaningful, comprehensive, evidence-based workplace violence law. I live in Salem and currently work in Albany as an emergency department nurse.

I was recently on 1/22/2017 a victim of physical violence from a patient my unit was caring for. I went in to the patient's room because she was yelling and her family called for help. When I went into her room she began yelling at me then suddenly came off the bed and punched me in my right eye. I suffered a fractured of the orbital bone and damage to my eye which I am still being treated for. This was an unprovoked attack. I missed three days of work and have had several medical appointments since the injury.

I did not become a nurse to receive physical violence as part of my profession and work environment. Nor should I have to endure verbal assaults from patients who are receiving care. My unit has only one security guard who is on duty at night in our hospital and they are not always rapidly available to help in these violent situations that now occur several times a week in our facility. We must find effective ways to meaningfully increase our security in all medical facilities so as to prevent injuries from occurring in the first place. Additionally, there is a critical need for hospitals statewide to more consistently track these violent events so are better able to formulate effective violence prevention strategies.

As of now there is no explicit reporting system that follows violent incidents in hospitals. We also need to increase penalties for those who willfully enact violent events upon medical staff. We as a society are allowing this behavior by not establishing consequences for violent acts toward health professionals. The forthcoming amendment would address expanding the current bill to create more robust incident reporting requirements to the Oregon Health Authority and require increased security in the most at-risk hospital departments. I hope to never experience another assault at work but there currently there is a high probability that I will unless substantive changes are to occur. Today, I would have a difficult time encouraging any young person to become an emergency department nurse due to the lack of safety we are facing in this setting.

Thank you for your consideration in supporting HB 2620 and the forthcoming amendment to strengthen the bill.

Melissa Pfeleger, RN, CEN