



Oregon AFSCME Supports SB 823
Oregon Health Care Worker Protection Act

Chair Monnes Anderson, Vice-chair Linthicum and members of the committee,

Thank you, for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of SB 823, a bill addressing the needs of the workforce in reporting and responding to workplace injuries that have lasting physical and emotional impacts due behaviors of people in crisis. Oregon AFSCME Council 75 represents many employees in a variety of care-giving and health care professions. Many of these members have stories of incidents where they, other co-workers, the patients, or even others in care have been injured and many solutions have been proposed and discussed.

Previous discussions that AFSCME has been involved in to address workplace injuries of this type have often focused on elevating criminal penalties, hoping to dissuade the people from causing harm to others. However, in most cases, this approach is inappropriate – putting additional strain on our criminal defense system instead of addressing the issues of prevention whether in the workplace or in providing behavioral health services more broadly. SB 823 addresses workplace injuries from an evidence based preventative focus giving frontline workforce skills in recognizing when a person may be in crisis and providing supports and interventions that reduce risk a far more effective strategy that charging people with crimes.

Additionally, AFSCME is supportive of the protections built into SB 823 for employees who report harmful incidents. Having these protections ensures that we are all seeking the information to be able to properly address issues instead of allowing these physical and emotional injuries continue to happen. When we set the expectation that reporting should happen and the problems should be addressed, we are more likely to see better outcomes for all.

Oregon AFSCME Council 75 urges your support and passage of SB 823.

Respectfully submitted by Eva Rippeteau, political coordinator, Oregon AFSCME Council 75.