



**Statement for the Record
Senate Health Care Committee
May 16, 2019**

SB 823, Workplace Violence Reporting for Health Care Workers

Chair Salinas and members of the committee, please accept this statement for the record on behalf of OR-ACEP, the Oregon Chapter of the American College of Emergency Physicians. OR-ACEP is a medical society that has represented physicians specializing in emergency medicine since 1971 and its members share a commitment to improve emergency healthcare for all Oregonians.

OR-ACEP supports SB 823, which would prohibit health care employers from retaliating against employees who make a good faith report of assaults occurring at the workplace. It would also include other measures; security personnel for the emergency department and the development of a public annual report.

The American College of Emergency Physicians has a clear position on the issue of violence against emergency department personnel at work. “Optimal patient care can only be achieved when patients, health care workers and all other persons in the emergency department are protected against violent acts occurring within the department. The violent trends in our society have been of increasing concern...Not only do ED personnel treat the results of this violence, but they witness violence acts in our EDs.”

Here’s some examples of behavior one emergency physician experienced in the course of her duties:

- 1) Patient calling and pretending to be a relative to get personal information.
- 2) Profanity when the patient doesn’t get what they want.
- 3) Patient threatens to “find me” and “you will regret this.”
- 4) Patient threatens to complain to board and make my life “hell.”
- 5) Patient throwing things or knocking things down right next to me to intimidate, — or getting close so you have to back up and make sure you can escape.
- 6) Colleague hit in face with a clipboard.
- 7) Colleagues who have been kicked and punched.

Chapter President- Samuel Kim, MD FACEP

Chapter Executive- Liz Mesberg

President-Elect- Michael McCaskill, MD FACEP **Government Relations Director-** Katy King



No one should ever have to put up with this behavior or violent situations in the workplace.

In addition to the steps in SB 823, OR-ACEP recommends:

- Provide an ED security system based upon institution-specific risk assessment that includes adequate security personnel, sufficient training of personnel, physical barriers, surveillance equipment, and other security components.
- Conduct ongoing assessments of the ED security system performance.
- Coordinate the hospital security system with local law enforcement agencies.
- Develop written ED protocols with input from employees for violent situations occurring in the ED to ensure the safety of patients, visitors, and health care workers alike.
- Educate staff through formal, regular training on early recognition of individuals with potential to become violent, techniques for de-escalation, non-violent crisis intervention, and importance of seeking assistance.
- Develop and enforce a mandatory reporting policy that requires employees to promptly report any verbal or physical assault. Such policies should clearly state that reporting will not result in any adverse action by the hospital such as termination, threatening to terminate, demoting, suspending, or in any manner discriminating against an employee who reports an assault.
- Adopt a zero tolerance policy for employees, patients, and visitors that states that any violence in the ED is not acceptable. Educate employees that any assault is not considered “part of the job.”
- Provide appropriate post-incident support for employees involved in violent events including prompt medical treatment, debriefing, counseling, and employee assistance.
- Pursue maximum criminal prosecution, when deemed appropriate, against those individuals who commit violent acts against health care workers.

In summary, violence against health care workers is a growing problem in Oregon and the rest of the nation. Health care workers have a right to a violence-free workplace. This bill sends a clear message to potential assailants and it also sends a message to health care workers that their jobs are important to society and that threats and acts undermining their jobs will not be tolerated.

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