

May 16, 2019

**Re: Senate Bill 823A – OAHHS Supports**

Chair Salinas and Members of the House Health Care Committee:

On behalf of Oregon's 62 hospitals and health care systems, and the patients and communities they serve, we appreciate the opportunity to share with you our support for SB 823A to prevent workplace violence in healthcare.

The journey to SB 823A began in 2014 when OAHHS, Oregon hospitals, SEIU Local 49 and the Oregon Nurses Association (ONA) came together to collectively address the incidents, employee and organizational concerns, and costs associated with violence against health care employees. This collaboration, after four years of dialogue, pilot projects in Oregon hospitals, and fine-tuning practices, led to the development of the Workplace Violence Prevention Toolkit which has been deployed across the state. The toolkit has received national recognition and is now recognized by the Joint Commission as a recommended resource for other health care employers to proactively and comprehensively address workplace violence.

SB 823A seeks to improve Oregon's current workplace safety laws by embedding many of the toolkit elements and evidence-based best practices into statute and to address security, data sharing, and improving protections for reporting. In its current form the bill reflects the following shared objectives:

1. Improving protections for those who report in good faith. Currently, reporting assaults is not specifically called out under ORS 654.062, which provides anti-retaliation protections to employees who report a violation of the law, regulation, or standard pertaining to safety and health in the place of employment. We believe SB 823A creates a safer environment that will help employees feel safer to report assaults. This should help improve the data being tracked in the assault logs, in which we all agree incidents are likely underreported.
2. Current law requires every health care employer to conduct a periodic security and safety assessment. Then based on that assessment, develop and implement an assault prevention and protection program and provide ongoing training for the prevention and protection of employees. SB 823A requires each health care employer to perform an assessment using a tool that is recognized nationally or statewide and that assessment must be completed by the end of June 2021. This assessment tool could be the one recommended in the Workplace Violence Prevention toolkit.
3. Senate Bill 823A also require that workplace safety committees review their assault prevention and protection plans every two years to assess efficacy and consider additional areas for improvement and revision, and to update them as needed.
4. Empowering the workplace safety committees by giving them access to pertinent information about assaults, injuries, and illnesses that are barriers to health and safe work environments. SB 823A requires that the employer share a summary of information that is collected in the hospital assault log, injury and illness log, but also from other sources including the code grey logs, staff surveys, and information garnered from environmental scans (walk-throughs). The bill protects this information and ensures that it is used for the improvement of the safety and health of the workplace.

OAHHS appreciates the collaboration with its partners on the initial work to develop and create the Workplace Violence Prevention Toolkit, and the seriousness with which Oregon hospitals have undertaken this work. Furthermore, we appreciate ONA for working with us in improving Oregon's current health care workplace safety law.

While no bill or law can fully predict or prevent every assault, the more open discussions administration and direct care providers can have about it and the more we prepare for an incident, the greater chance we can collectively work to reduce assaults on our health care employees.

We hope that you will join us in working towards an environment that protects our health care providers by supporting SB 823A.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Andi Easton". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "A" and "E".

Andi Easton  
Vice President Government Affairs  
Oregon Association of Hospitals and Health Systems