

Submitter: Renee Perry
On Behalf Of: Jay Harris
Committee: House Committee On Judiciary
Measure: HB4142

Dear Committee,

I am writing today in support of and asking you to support healthcare workers by passing legislation that would create penalties for those people who violently harm healthcare workers.

I have been a Psychiatric Registered Nurse for 42 years. I currently work as an RN at Salem Hospital. I have witnessed and been the victim of patient violence many more times than I can count or care to remember. I have witnessed a significant increase in patient violence toward healthcare staff within the past few years that is unparalleled in my career. I have witnessed many of my peers severely injured by violent patients, to the point of no longer being able to work. I have witnessed many of my peers severely injured by violent patients to the point that they simply decide to quit the healthcare system.

I have worked in other States in which those who violently assault healthcare workers are held accountable to the justice system for those actions. My experience as an Oregon healthcare professional is that people who violently assault staff are not being held to account for those actions. If I were to violently assault another person, I would be held accountable for those acts. In my experience, people who violently assault healthcare workers in Oregon, or at least in Marion County, are not held accountable for those actions in any way whatsoever.

I have, over the years, been the victim of patient violence or witnessed such violence on other staff many times and have subsequently contacted law enforcement to report and request those perpetrating these violent acts be held accountable. My experience is that we who have been violently assaulted are told that there is nothing that can be done about these violent acts. We are routinely informed by law enforcement staff that patients will not be cited for violence and if they are cited, they will be immediately released with little to no accountability for those acts.

This is an absolutely unacceptable response from the justice system in this State. People who commit and often repeatedly commit acts of violence against healthcare workers are not being held accountable for these dangerous and illegal acts. These behaviors are escalating in healthcare settings, in large part, because patients are not being held accountable. Healthcare workers are being severely injured, often to the point of losing their livelihood. Patients are told that violent acts will be reported to the police, only to find out that reporting such acts result in no action. This is unacceptable.

I am strongly encouraging you and personally asking you to support and insist legislation be passed to protect healthcare workers from increasingly violent acts from patients. There is no reason for healthcare workers to have to take their lives into their own hands for just going to work and trying to help others, with no

protection from violence.

Please hear our plea for help on this critical issue. We are getting hurt, often times beyond our ability to continue in our chosen profession. It is time we are protected from violence in the workplace. Healthcare workers are entitled to feel safe in the workplace and reassured that when patient violence does occur that there are protections in place to hold those responsible for the violence to be held accountable. Thank you for your time and attention to this matter,

Jay Harris, MSN, RN-BC