



Service Employees International Union – Oregon State Council

February 3, 2022

Dear Chair Bynum, Vice-Chair Noble, and Members of the Committee,

For the record, my name is Katie Shriver, and I work with the SEIU Oregon State Council. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB 4142.

SEIU Oregon includes both Locals 49 and 503; together, these two Locals represent 85,000 working Oregonians. SEIU represents thousands of hospital workers in Oregon, including certified nursing assistants, licensed practical nurses, environmental services workers, respiratory therapists, mental health therapists and licensed practical nurses at the Oregon State Hospital, and many others.

Healthcare workers are disproportionately likely to be injured due to workplace violence. Every year SEIU members have been injured while working in hospitals from choking, punching, and kicking, and many of our workers in emergency rooms and psychiatric facilities experience this frequently. Workplace violence in health care settings puts health care workers and patients at risk while also significantly impacting patient care. When workers are injured on the job it contributes to understaffing and can diminish the sense of safety and stability of other workers and patients alike.

In addition, COVID has created even greater challenges for hospital worker safety. Hospital workers have continued to show up in service to their communities throughout the pandemic, while at the same time the pandemic has dramatically exacerbated chronic understaffing. Chronic understaffing creates an impossible situation for workers. When workers are stretched thin, their ability to provide high-quality patient care is diminished, and it can be difficult to de-escalate or address issues before they result in violence. Understaffing also creates additional safety risks for workers because it leaves a worker more likely to be alone without support from other workers.

This is why we believe that while HB 4142 could improve safety, we don't believe it is the only solution to workplace violence for healthcare workers. We encourage the Legislature to consider other evidence-based policies to help identify and address the root causes of violence in health care settings, training and reporting, as well as consider policies to reduce chronic understaffing.