



February 3, 2022

Honorable Janelle Bynum
Chair, House Judiciary Committee
Oregon State Legislature
Salem, OR 97301

RE: HB 4142 – Protecting hospital caregivers

Dear Representative Bynum and member of the House Judiciary committee:

PeaceHealth is compelled by our mission to ensure access to compassionate, healing health services to all who seek care at our facilities. Community access to health services is what PeaceHealth is built upon as the Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace voyaged across the United States to establish healthcare in the Frontier Northwest. Caregivers have been the cornerstone of delivering PeaceHealth's mission of healing since the Sisters' perilous journey in 1890, and caregiver safety as they journey through PeaceHealth hospitals could not be more important today.

Nurses, security personnel, medical assistants, doctors, and thousands of caregivers in hospitals all over Oregon have diligently given of themselves, working directly in harm's way, day in and day out, managing COVID's devastating surges. It is not acceptable that caregivers and providers are physically assaulted while working so hard to impart healing to their neighbors. Ensuring caregiver and provider safety and the safety of patients in the communities we serve is our number one priority. When violent acts are committed against our dedicated caregivers and providers, we immediately investigate the root cause and mitigation strategies. Very often drugs and alcohol are the main factors in assaults against caregivers, and we are committed to working with you on increasing equitable access to drug and alcohol treatment and other upstream social determinates of health.

PeaceHealth urges your support of HB 4142 which expands the crime of assault in the third degree to include crimes perpetrated against hospital workers. We also encourage you to continue the important work around access to drug and alcohol treatment. We know that Oregonians use opioids at the second highest rate in the US, and we know that alcohol use and related violence is up exponentially during the COVID pandemic. We are hopeful that this legislation acts as a deterrent to violent acts and our caregivers can feel more confident that they can go to work and return home safely to their families.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Todd Salnas".

Todd Salnas,
Chief Executive, Oregon