

February 4, 2022

Dear Chair Bynum and Committee Members,

I am on behalf of our emergency medicine providers in support of HB4121 which makes it a felony to assault hospital staff. NACS is an independent emergency medicine practice that staffs Legacy Health System Hospitals in the greater Portland, OR and Vancouver, WA area. Our team of 150 providers care for over 250,000 patient visits to Legacy's emergency departments, pediatric emergency departments, ambulatory care units and urgent care centers.

As emergency medicine providers it is our mission to provide the best possible care to anyone, anytime who seeks care in our facilities. We are legally and ethically obligated under Federal law to treat anyone who seeks care in the Emergency Department no matter their condition or ability to pay. We take this responsibility seriously and are proud to provide a universal safety net of acute care to our community. Indeed, this opportunity to provide guaranteed universal care was one of the things that inspired me to become an emergency physician twenty years ago. Yet as a young medical student, I never would have imagined that I would repeatedly fear for my safety at work as a practicing physician.

I have been hit, spit on, and had my life verbally threatened by patients I am trying to help. I have seen nurses and security officers punched and kicked, twice resulting in broken bones. I have witnessed a patient use a chair as an assault weapon against security officers who were trying to protect me. As a physician I am not always directly in harm's way, yet I am the team leader and therefore feel personally and emotionally responsible each and every time a nurse, technician, resident or security officer is assaulted by a patient in my department. The stress in our communities and the alarming lack of addiction and mental health resources translates into anger and violence directed at our teams. Now more than ever frontline healthcare professionals are being pushed past a breaking point, resulting in increased burn out, attrition, and, tragically, suicides. We need your support to keep this essential community lifeline safe and resilient.

On behalf of our team at NACS I urge you to pass HB 4142 as the first step along a path to demonstrating your support of healthcare workers who put their lives on the line every day to help keep society as healthy as possible.

Sincerely,



Daniel Bissell, MD FACEP
President & CEO