



February 20, 2023

TO: Chair Prozanski and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee
FROM: Association of Oregon Counties Legislative Affairs Manager, Michael Burdick
RE: AOC support for SB 787

Dear Chair Prozanski and Members of the Committee,

I offer this testimony in support of SB 787 on behalf of the Association of Oregon Counties (AOC) which has represented Oregon's county governments since 1906.

Public transit vehicle operators must maintain focus and concentration at all times for the safety of those riding in the vehicle and that of all the other road users in the vicinity. Assaults against public transit vehicle operators may cause injury not just to the person being assaulted, but also anyone riding in the vehicle or anyone in the vicinity of the vehicle, because the driver could be distracted or incapacitated, which could cause a crash. Therefore, assaulting a public transit vehicle operator has many potential victims beyond the individual being assaulted.

Additionally, offensive behavior that may not be serious enough to be considered assault under normal circumstances becomes significantly more serious if directed against the driver of a public transit vehicle. For these reasons, enhanced penalties for assaults against public transit vehicle operators are justified, and certain offensive behaviors that would normally not meet the threshold of legal assault should be treated as assault when directed against a public transit vehicle operator who is carrying out their duties.

Best,

Michael Burdick