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Bend, OR

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To the House Judiciary Committee re. House Bill 4088-2

Chair Kropf, Vice Chairs Wallan and Andersen and the committee,

Thank you for taking the time to listen and learn how workplace violence from patients is affecting bedside caregivers. Unfortunately, assaults involving bedside caregivers have increased. We are asking you to please hear us and help protect us now. The increase in violence from our patients is going unnoticed by the legal system and leaving us caregivers at the bedside feeling vulnerable. It is why I write this testimony in support of HB 4088-2.

My name is Emily Kroytz and I'm a registered nurse working in the state of Oregon. I currently work in Bend as an ICU nurse. I graduated from nursing school in 2001. I Love my job and am very proud of what I do. I have found a place where I can serve and love my community through care. Like many of my coworkers, I will not hesitate to stop and help a person in need. Caregivers must get close to the sick to comfort them and save their lives. There is no way to help these patients by standing afar. Until recently, it was not an expectation of the bedside caregivers to protect themselves and our patients from assault.

I have been assaulted by patients who have caused injury enough to take me out of work. I also have seen caregivers get assaulted and have held the caregiver as I hear their story of assault. I would like to share with you some of those stories and their effects.

I was given a concussion by an agitated patient during bedside care which also resulted in PTSD.

The patient came out of the operating room into the ICU for recovery. The doctor stood with him as he lay in bed. Suddenly, he became very agitated and paranoid. He started trying to fight the nurses at the bedside who were helping him settle in the ICU. He needed 5 caregivers to hold him down. I saw that he pulled his Arterial IV line out of his wrist during the struggle. It needed to be controlled or he could bleed to death. I was one of the five holding him down while holding his artery from bleeding. When he was being held down and getting medication to calm him, I took that moment to make sure I was holding enough pressure. At that moment, he jerked his leg out of the hold and kneed me in the head with full force. I obtained a concussion, ended up in the ER, and was out of work for 2 months. I experienced many symptoms of a concussion while off work that affected my role as a parent and a wife.

I was kicked across a room by a patient under the influence of drugs, causing back pain and bruises followed by PTSD.

We had a patient withdrawing from drugs so severely that he had to be sedated and on a breathing machine. He was so agitated that his arms had to be restrained so that he would not remove his breathing tube. If he pulled it out, he would die. He was placed in a drug-induced coma. My partner and I went in to give him medical care. He suddenly woke up through all the sedation, put his feet on my chest, and pushed me across the room. I was literally in the air; I hit the wall of cabinets and fell to the ground. My partner screamed. I had bruises on my back that made me cringe when I was hugged by my family.

I have been with and heard of numerous injuries to caregivers, the following are just a few of them:

- The patient got agitated and beat the nurse with a hydro flask so badly that the nurse was out for a year.
- The agitated patient grabbed the nurse and punched her while she was coming in to administer care. She had so much PTSD from the event she left the nursing profession.
- The patient picked up a chair and threw it at the window. Broke the medical bed he was in. He then fought the caregivers in the room whom he thought would prevent him from hurting himself. He sent three to the ER with injuries and many with emotional distress from the event.
- A patient grabbed the nurse's long hair and slammed her head down on the bedside table.
- The patient grabbed an IV pole and swung at the caregivers, then ran into a paralyzed patient's room with the pole, causing a traumatic scene not only for the caregivers but for the patient who had no way of protecting themselves.
- The nurse's stethoscope was used to choke her while she was in their room.
- The pregnant nurse was kicked in her stomach by the aggressive and agitated patient which caused bleeding and preterm labor.

Nothing happened to these patients for the physical, mental, and emotional injuries that they caused to their innocent caregiver.

We are suffering while the patient who caused these injuries to the caregiver is discharged home. This is not right!

Patients *choose* to take drugs and *choose not* to take their medications. If a drunk driver *chooses* to drive and then kills a family, they are charged with manslaughter. The patient who chooses to assault a caregiver during withdrawal gets discharged to their home after our care, while the caregiver must now suffer physical and emotional injury. **It should be an escalated crime to assault a caregiver during bedside care.**

I believe that the State of Oregon can be a part of the solution to keep us caregivers safe at the bedside. I would like to know that the judicial system supports us at the bedside. It's a felony to assault a police officer, it should be a felony to assault a caregiver at the bedside. Nursing school teaches us to care for the sick, not protect ourselves from assault. HB 4088-2 is a step forward which aligns what's happening to hospital workers with the legal consequences of when it happens to law enforcement. It also takes up other

needed approaches, including some requirements for hospitals, and some state-funded opportunities for hospitals to increase security.

Thank you for taking the time to read this urging that the Legislature take action. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out.

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