

TRAVIS NELSON
STATE REPRESENTATIVE
HOUSE DISTRICT 44
NORTH/NORTHEAST PORTLAND



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Testimony in Support of House Bill 4088

February 13, 2024

Chair Kropf, Vice-Chairs Anderson and Wallen, and Members of the House Committee on Judiciary,

My name is Travis Nelson, and I am honored to represent House District 44- North and Northeast Portland. Today, I bring to you the voice of the healthcare community, not only as a legislator but also as someone who has served as a Nurse for 20 years. During my time at the bedside, I have been hit, spit on and pinched too many times to count. I am here to strongly advocate for House Bill 4088, a bill designed to confront the growing violence against healthcare workers in Oregon decisively.

Let's be clear about the facts. I consistently hear from nurses and hospital staff that they do not feel safe, a sentiment that is supported by data. A survey conducted in Oregon in 2022 found that 70% of emergency department nurses experienced assault at work, with 30% reporting having been assaulted one to three times in the past year. These pervasive incidents are not unique to Oregon. On average, 57 nurses are assaulted daily across the nation, and we know that most assaults are underreported. However, statistics do not capture the entire story. This issue concerns real people who dedicate their lives to caring for others yet continue to face risks of harm in their workplace. It's time we stand up for them.

I want to extend my gratitude for the time and feedback received from various stakeholders. I would like to take a moment to thank Representative Boshart Davis for working on this issue for several years and working with me since the last session on House Bill 4088. I want to extend a special thanks go to the DA's, hospitals, doctors, nurses, therapists, nurse aides, other healthcare workers and labor unions for helping to shape an amendment that I believe reflects the values of everyone in our coalition and, most importantly, begins to address this critical issue.

House Bill 4088 as amended expands the crime of assault to the third degree to anyone who intentionally or knowingly causes physical injury to a working person within the hospital that is acting in the course of official duty. Hospitals that provide inpatient mental health treatment to adults and adolescents are exempt from the enhanced penalty. This exemption includes the Oregon State Hospital.

Hospitals will also be required to display signs near all entrances that will inform the public that injuring hospital workers is a crime. Signage will also be required for employees to inform them of their rights, reporting assaults and workplace protections. These signs will also be provided in multiple languages.

HB 4088 also focuses on preventing workplace violence in hospitals through several measures. Most significantly through a grant program that help individual hospitals to apply for funds to meet their specific needs. Funds will be distributed to The Oregon Health Authority to develop and administer this grant program. Eligibility requires hospital safety committee approval and can be used in supporting measures from metal and weapon detection systems, staff training, and additional violence prevent and protection measures. Priority will be given to rural and critical access hospitals.

We understand the importance of safety committee representation from voices who are living and working in hospitals. This bill will also ensure hospitals, with unionized employees, be required to include a labor union representative in safety committees as non-voting participants.

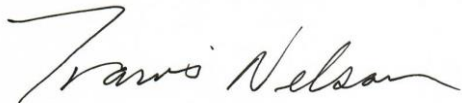
To also increase the safety of healthcare workers, employee name badges will only include their first name unless the employee request to include their last name or if required by federal regulations. This is a measure that has been requested by employees to protect their privacy and safety.

Lastly, we have ensured enhancements in reporting to increase transparency about workplace violence. Authority will be granted to DCBS to collect information sent to federal OSHA.

I strongly believe HB 4088 adopts a comprehensive approach to addressing workplace violence -a step that is long overdue. I urge the committee to vote yes and support this crucial bill. This is the step Oregon needs to safeguard our healthcare workers and, by extension, our entire community.

Thank you for your time and attention to this vital issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Travis Nelson". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name.

State Representative Travis Nelson RN, BSN
House District 44, North/NE Portland