

Testimony in support of House Bill 4088-2

House Committee On Judiciary

February 13, 2024

Natasha Schwartz RN, Oregon Nurses Association

Chair Kropf, Vice Chairs Wallan and Andersen, and members of the Committee,

My name is Natasha Schwartz and I am an OHSU nurse and director on the board of directors of Oregon Nurses Association. I am in support of HB 4088-2, as are the nurses I know.

Nurses are experiencing violence and assault on a daily basis. Hospitals are not holding patients accountable for their actions and not creating a safe workplace for their staff. There are often no consequences for acts of assault. Direct-care nurses have not been sitting on our safety committees.

Last winter I directly experienced threats of gun violence by a patient's family member: It took multiple incidents of a family member assaulting nurses for them to be trespassed from the hospital. The nurses were not encouraged to file police reports or given resources to do so at a later time. Once trespassed, they continued to make threats and called our unit saying they would bring a gun and shoot us. As a night shift nurse over a holiday, I had to work through the fear of an attack. I was ensured that we would have additional safety; that never occurred. Our hospital has many unlocked points of entry and a metal detector that is not always in use. There is no way to ensure a trespassed individual doesn't make it into the hospital. During these threats, we were told to just hide in the medication room. All the hospital could provide was a public safety officer coming by a few times during the night.

It is imperative that more be done to prevent and respond to violence. There should be stronger security. There should be more attention brought to safety committees, and expansion of who may attend them and what facility-wide safety plans they are undertaking. There should be state funding for this. There should be better alignment with the legal system and legal consequences for those who harm. Join me in lifting up these solutions with your support of House Bill 4088-2.