



Your Life. Your Voice.

February 16, 2024

To: Chair Kropf, Chair, House Committee on Judiciary

From: Gabrielle Guedon, Executive Director, Oregon Self Advocacy Coalition

RE: HB 4088-2, creating felony charges for assaults on hospital workers

Chair Kropf and members of the committee,

The Oregon Self Advocacy Coalition is a statewide coalition that supports 18 local groups. All of our members experience intellectual or developmental disabilities. We bring self-advocates together so they can speak with one voice about things that matter to them.

We envision an Oregon where self-advocates live in their communities and have the lives they want, have the jobs they want, live with people they choose, have healthcare and supports they need to be independent.

I am writing today to share OSAC's opposition to the -2 amendment of HB 4088. The original bill exempted people with IDD from felony charges based on misdemeanor assaults. The -2 amendment removed that exemption. People with IDD want to protect hospital workers. We also want to be safe ourselves when we seek hospital services. OSAC is concerned about the long-term impacts of felony charges on housing access and other vital resources for people with IDD. This would limit options for people with IDD that are already scarce.

At times, people with IDD may not know what they are doing as they react to stressful, scary, or painful situations, or experience panic attacks. You can't always see and understand that from the outside. We get overwhelmed and go into fight or flight responses. We are not purposely hurting hospital workers—we are scared.



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People with more significant disabilities that limit communication do not always know how to react. They rely on the support of friends, family, and skilled providers to help. When hospital workers take the time to include those supporters and ask what really works for them and what doesn't, it results in a better outcome.

For people with disabilities that are less visible, it's important not to assume that you know how they are processing or responding to a situation. Hospital workers need to listen to people with IDD and their supporters to know how to work well with the person. There are sometimes written Safety and Behavior plans that would help guide workers on how to get that specific person the help they need safely. Hospital workers deserve the training to know what to look for, who to bring in, and how to work together with the IDD system to keep everyone safe.

Hospital workers deserve to be safe. OSAC believes that we will come to better, more effective solutions when we work as a community with the IDD system and people with IDD to keep everyone safe. We want all people to thrive in a hospital setting, and we ask that you do not pass HB 4088-2 and look for better, more effective solutions alongside people with IDD.