



February 18, 2024

Good morning Chair, Vicechair and members of the committee,

For the record, my name is Kristen Brown and I work at the Oregon State Hospital. I've worked at the State Hospital since 2005 and I started working at OSH because I wanted to help the most vulnerable Oregonians. I am writing in support of SB 606 and want to note that I can only speak to my experience here in 2011 when I was absolutely having symptoms of PTSD after working 50-I for several years.

Many providers documented this but when they sent me to a SAIF provider he said it was anxiety and depression because I was put on an antidepressant when I was 19? Only problem, I had never taken the antidepressant at that time. They found that I actually had thyroid issues causing the fatigue, not depression. It didn't matter though. When I contacted a workman's comp attorney they told me SAIF would "tear my whole life apart" to find any reason to blame my symptoms on other things, rather than admitting it was from the countless traumatic experiences I endured working with that population.

I have scars on my body from patients that aren't even alive anymore from that period of time. I'd never taken any antidepressants or anxiety medications until after I worked here for many years. It's hard to not feel anxious when you're living in your limbic system day after day.

I have witnessed colleagues of mine get injured on the job and be expected to show up the next day even after physical assaults where flesh is bitten off of someone's body or where teeth are knocked out to the point where dentures are required. I have also personally had glass thrown at me and still have scars on my body from those instances.

This bill is crucial to ensure we're able to access treatment for our mental health injuries caused by the job. It will allow workers to actually file claims and seek treatment so we can continue caring for the most vulnerable in Oregon.

Thank you and I urge and aye vote from this committee.