

TRAVIS NELSON
STATE REPRESENTATIVE
HOUSE DISTRICT 44
NORTH/NORTHEAST PORTLAND



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Testimony in Support for Senate Bill 537

Chair Patterson, Vice-Chair Hayden and Members of the Senate Committee on Healthcare,

My name is Travis Nelson, State Representative for House District 44, North and Northeast Portland.

Thank you for hearing Senate Bill 537, which aims to prevent workplace violence against healthcare workers in hospitals and in home health and hospice settings. While no single law can eliminate workplace violence, we must ensure that when it happens, victims receive support, accountability is upheld, and policymakers have the data to strengthen protections. SB 537 will allow us to continue to keep our essential healthcare workers safe.

Assaults against healthcare workers is not abstract, or intangible: Healthcare workers experience 5 times more workplace violence than workers in other industries [\[1\]](#) and you will hear directly from impacted workers today.

Senate Bill 537 is an important step to fix these statistics – and to support our healthcare workers whose lives are deeply impacted through calamitous physical and mental injury far too often.

Senate Bill 537 has five pillars:

- 1. Defining workplace violence in statute**
- 2. Preventing workplace violence in hospitals**
- 3. Preventing workplace violence in home health and hospice settings**
- 4. Improving response to violence when it occurs**
- 5. Improving reporting**

We **define** workplace violence to ensure that current protections extend to threats of violence and verbal attacks. We **prevent** violence in hospitals and in the home health and hospice settings by improving de-escalation trainings and by requiring behavioral health patient safety flags that protect both worker and patient by identifying triggers and ensuring safe care, and through other provisions that the healthcare workers testifying today will speak to. We **improve response** to violence by requiring that the staff person gets paid time off for the rest of that shift if too injured or traumatized to work the rest of the shift, and by providing trauma counseling and first aid. The days of a simple “goodbye hope you feel better,” or worse, blaming the victim for not doing enough to prevent violence, must end. And finally, we **improve reporting** by having hospitals provide incident logs to OSHA at DCBS, who will produce an every-four-year report to the legislature to inform future policymaking.

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There is also an amendment for this legislation that has not been posted yet. It removes safety committee changes, specifies required training, and that bulletproof glass is installed in new or remodeled emergency departments (with no retrofitting required) and improves information for home health and hospice workers when accepting new patients. Additionally, at the request of the hospital association, this amendment will eliminate the grant program.

At its core, SB 537 is about ensuring that healthcare workers—the people we trust to take care of us at our most vulnerable—are not left vulnerable themselves. For frontline workers, this is more than just policy, it's a commitment. I am honored to stand with them.

Thank you for your time and consideration of SB 537 and for listening to my fellow nurses today. I hope that you will move this bill out of committee.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Travis Nelson".

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