

## Testimony in Support of SB 537

March 22, 2025

TO: Senate Committee on Health Care  
Chair Patterson, Vice Chair Hayden, and members of the committee,

As an elected leader of the Oregon Nurses Association, I have talked to nurses and healthcare workers across the state. Workplace Violence is not unique to the metro area it is occurring across the state. I have heard the terrifying stories of bomb threats, death threats, shootings, murders, and assaults. I have heard stories of harassment, verbal and sexual assault. Many nurses feel unsafe and unsupported.

Personally, I have been verbally and physically assaulted at work and witnessed the assaults of my colleagues. Ten years ago, a nurse and I were responding to a bed alarm, and she was strangled by a male patient that was in his right mind but upset about his diagnosis. She was pregnant at the time. During 2021 while caring for patients with Covid I was working on a unit where violence was common. One shift a patient was threatening us and after a search we found a handgun in his bag. It was disturbing that some patients were repeat offenders, a patient would assault one nurse one shift and then another the next, repeatedly without appropriate measures taken. But violence also impacted other patients. It was tragic when abusive and disruptive patients took resources away from other patients and endangered their care.

The trauma of workplace violence leads to and exacerbates burnout and moral injury. I left the bedside in 2022, and it took years for me to return. Resignations and workers leaving the profession are adding to the nursing shortage especially in high-risk clinical areas. I now work in a low-risk clinical area.

It is unacceptable that nurses and healthcare workers fear for their lives at work. SB 537 calls for simple, proven, evidence-based prevention measures and protection. Additionally, SB 537 would improve the response and investigation of workplace violence. Victims would receive first aid and be offered trauma counseling.

The home health components of SB 537 are especially important. Home health workers often work alone. The intake risk assessment would screen for security risks such as weapons and drugs in the home. A couple years ago a home health nurse was providing care to an elderly patient and the patients grandson shot and killed them.

We urge you to act, to vote yes on SB 537 to prevent workplace violence.

Thank you,  
Allison Seymour, RN, BSN  
Oregon Nurses Association-Secretary