

Submitter: Barbara Ritenour  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: House Committee On Judiciary  
Measure: HB4142

Good afternoon chairperson Bynum and Judiciary committee members,

As an Emergency Nurse who works in Portland, and member of your constituency, I am writing in support of HB 4142. This is my 3rd time addressing the legislature in regard to this subject. It is critical that Hospital Staff receive protection under the law from assault! Our healthcare system is on the brink of collapse and healthcare workers are leaving in droves. A huge reason is the lack of protection. Just this year I have had multiple coworkers assaulted and who have left the emergency department due to the increase in violence and the need to find a safer job. Who will care for the most vulnerable? And who wants to continue working in a dangerous environment when the city and state you serve in do very little to protect you?

Did you know if someone breaks a window or does damage to a building worth more than a \$1000, they can be charged with a felony? But if that same person assaults a healthcare worker, they may or may not be charged with a felony. Both of things have happened this year where I work.

I have been a nurse since 1992. I have worked in multiple capacities in the hospital and for the last 10 years in the Emergency Department. The behavior of patients and their friends and family has gotten significantly worse over the last few years. I have been a part of the multiple attempts to increase the penalty for assault against healthcare workers. It is nurses, doctors, social workers, techs, CNA's and security who get assaulted.

It is frustrating to me that my coworker, Sarah Evans, was assaulted last June. She had multiple closed fist hits to her head and neck, resulting in a significant head injury that has kept her out of work for months and up to now has only been able to work for eight hours a day a few times a week due to lingering problems from the assault. Her perpetrator has yet to spend even one day in jail and though the trial has been delayed over and over, the DA still only wants a misdemeanor charge. How insulting! How would you like to have your livelihood taken from you, even though it is on video, and the perpetrator barely even gets a slap on the wrist?

I love helping people, but assault is NOT a part of my job! I would love to have your support of this bill and would be willing to stand, give testimony and recruit others to be help make this law a reality in Oregon. I know that at least 39 of the 50 states have it a felony to assault a healthcare worker, including Washington. Why is Oregon so behind on this matter? I am required by law to see every person who

wants a medical screening exam, so why am I one of the few not covered?

If there is anything I can do to help support this bill, please let me know!

Thank you,

Barbara Ritenour  
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