February 9th, 2024

Members of the House Committee on Judiciary –

My name is Nathan Geissel, and I am an Emergency Department Registered Nurse. I am writing to voice my full support for HB4088. Assault on healthcare workers has risen rapidly over the past 10 years, especially in the years after the COVID pandemic. Data from the US Bureau of Labor Statistics shows that healthcare workers experience more non-fatal workplace violence injuries than any other profession, including law enforcement.

The ED sees an especially high amount of violence – violence that is largely tolerated as "part of the job". I know of multiple nurses, techs and physicians who've been assaulted. Many didn't bother to file charges because they didn't think it would end up being prosecuted. Upgrading the crime to a felony would hopefully prompt district attorneys to take the cases more seriously and be more inclined to prosecute them.

Healthcare workers deserve to be protected, and the current law doesn't do enough. Many surrounding states already classify assault on healthcare workers as a felony, including Washington (RCW 9A.36.041) and Idaho (ID 18-915). We deserve the same protections afforded to police officers, firefighters, and emergency medical services.

Another aspect of this bill that I find extremely important include the requirement for hospitals to remove last names from employee ID badges. Many Oregon hospitals require last names be printed on badges – some even disciplining those who cover it up. This opens the door for patients to stalk, threaten and harass healthcare staff. There is no reason for this to be on our badges – if there is a true concern, patients have the right to request their medical records which includes our full names through the proper channels. Having it on display during every patient interaction is only asking for trouble.

Given the recent events at Legacy Good Samaritan, as well as in many other hospitals throughout the United States, it's time that the Oregon Legislature take this issue seriously and pass laws that protect us.

Respectfully,

Nathan Geissel, RN, CEN