



**Oregon Chapter
American College of
Emergency Physicians**

February 25, 2025

To: Sen. Floyd Prozanski, Chair
Sen. Kim Thatcher, Vice Chair
Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee

From: Dr. Christian Smith, President OR-ACEP

RE: SB 170 Assaults in place of employment, -1 amendments

Chair Prozanski, Vice-Chair Thatcher and members of the committee, please accept this statement for the record on behalf of OR-ACEP, the Oregon Chapter of the American College of Emergency Physicians. OR-ACEP is a medical society that has represented physicians specializing in emergency medicine since 1971 and its members share a commitment to improve emergency healthcare for all Oregonians.

OR-ACEP opposes the -1 amendments to the bill which will increase the penalties for assaulting a person when performing official duties during the course of their employment. It would only apply to two or more convictions for assault. This is a such a high bar that only the rarest of cases would face consequences.

The chapter has worked on preventing assaults against healthcare providers with the Oregon Emergency Nurses Association, the Oregon Nurses Association and the Oregon Medical Association and other stakeholders for multiple sessions. Your action is needed now to protect healthcare workers and to make people accountable for assaulting them.

Assaults on healthcare workers have escalated during the pandemic and have reached a crisis point. You've seen the headlines. Healthcare workers demand and deserve legislation to protect them now more than ever. According to surveys by the American College of Emergency Physicians and the Emergency Nurses Association, almost half of emergency physicians reported being physically assaulted on the job. The number rises for emergency nurses; 70 percent of them report assaults at work.

According to a 2022 ACEP survey, 85 percent of emergency physicians believe the rate of violence experienced in emergency departments has increased over the past five years.

Chapter President- Christian Smith MD, FACEP

Chapter Executive- Michele Byers

President-Elect Patsy Chenpanas, MD

Government Rel. Director- Katy King

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OR-ACEP has surveyed members in 2022 and found that:

- Over half frequently feel unsafe at work
- 39 percent have been assaulted — most of those (71 percent) are not reported.

The reasons given are that most didn't have confidence that reporting would affect anything (65 percent) or that the effort of reporting was burdensome (34 percent).

Even when health care workers report assaults, it's hard to get law enforcement to take action for when a person is punched or kicked with no weapon involved.

Physical violence, intimidation and threats are not accepted in any other workplace, and they should not be allowed or tolerated in a health care setting. Emergency departments should be a safe space where patients are guaranteed they have the full attention and dedication of their care team to treat their ailments. We appreciate concerns that without such a high bar this bill might be misapplied to people with a mental illness or disability but healthcare workers rarely report assaults if it's clear the person was in active psychosis or couldn't understand their own actions. This happens every day.

The Oregon legislature has a responsibility to pass a bill not only to hold criminals appropriately responsible for their actions but as a way to tell Oregon's healthcare workers who regularly face violence in ways few other professions do, we appreciate your dedication and will do everything possible to never have you worry about getting home safely to see your family again.

We would appreciate the opportunity to work with stakeholders to refine the amendments so there are real consequences for assaulting a person in their place of employment.

Thank you for your consideration.

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