



# OREGON STATE FIRE FIGHTERS COUNCIL

International Association of Fire Fighters  
AFL-CIO CLC

February 26, 2025

House Committee on Judiciary  
Chair Jason Kropf  
Vice Chairs Chotzen and Wallen  
Committee Members

Mr. Chair, Vice Chairs and Committee Members,

Good afternoon and for the record, I'm Karl Koenig President of the Oregon State Fire Fighters Council. We represent over 3800 career fire fighters, paramedics, prevention and wildland professionals across Oregon.

We are here to testify in opposition to House Bill 2640. As paramedics and EMT's dealing with typically poor decisions daily we think the lessening of the crime of Aggravated Harassment to a misdemeanor is the wrong message being set in treating law enforcement and fire first responders we represent with respect and dignity. Having criminal charges brought against a person who has excreted bodily fluids onto another who clearly by doing so does not share our values and must be held accountable. Having spent my entire career as a Paramedic I have taken care of many patients that felt their only recourse in the given situation was to spit or try to spit on me. We could fill this room with paramedics and EMT's from all parts of the state and retell their terrible treatment by patients. The patients at the time felt so disparate in the moment that spitting or worse was the only recourse. We also realize the correctional system and AIC are not there for just spitting on a Law Enforcement officer or fire fighter. At the same time, we've learned through recent example that lessening crimes does not necessarily work well in Oregon.

We take our patients very seriously and their care the same. We have concerns that this Bill might turn into a science lesson on both sides. I will tell you as a caregiver in the back of an ambulance the lessening of the crime of this nature has consequences. Both mentally and physically for the care giver. While there are drugs to treat several different communicable diseases that arise from saliva, such as Epstein Barr Virus, the first virus to cause cancer or allow it to begin its path of destruction, numerous STD's, Hepatitis B and C to name just a few, they are not free or necessarily good for your health overall. EBV for instance only cure is a Stem Cell Transplant that costs \$35,000-100,000 and is quite debilitating during treatment, Hep C drugs are now available, but they too are expensive. Up to \$25,000 per the series. Those are the drug and procedure prices alone.

Missed work, terrible health until cured, mental anguish over recall of situation repeatedly during treatment is not a positive outcome for our EMT's and Paramedics. We think the price is too high to lessen the impact of this egregious activity.

The remainder of the bill does not have direct impact on our members and therefore we reserve comment.

If I can answer any questions, I will do my best to answer them

Regards

*Karl Koenig*

Karl Koenig

President

Oregon State Fire Fighters Council