

My name is Anthony Kyle, and I am a registered nurse in the Adult Emergency Department at Oregon Health & Science University. I am here today to express my strong support for SB 537.

Over the past several years, I have witnessed a concerning and alarming trend: a significant increase in both violence against healthcare staff and severe overcrowding within our emergency department. This situation has become untenable and poses a serious threat to the safety and well-being of both our patients and our dedicated healthcare professionals.

The statistics speak for themselves. During the month of March alone, (as of March 19th) we recorded a staggering 152 incidents of violence against staff. Of those, 90 were verbal assaults, and the remaining were physical attacks. This level of violence is simply unacceptable.

I, and many of my colleagues, now approach our shifts with a sense of dread and anxiety. We are nervous to come to work, unsure of what dangers we may face. It is heartbreaking to admit that I would not want to subject my own family members to the conditions we endure in our emergency department lobby, which has become increasingly overcrowded due to the persistent issue of patient boarding.

I want to share a particularly harrowing incident that occurred recently. A colleague, while attempting to de-escalate a violent patient in the lobby, was repeatedly punched in the face. This attack forced him to leave work immediately, disrupting not only his shift but also his personal life. As charge nurse, his sudden departure created significant challenges for the rest of the team. He also missed multiple days of work due to the emotional distress and trauma he experienced.

This is not an isolated incident. These are the realities we face daily. We are dedicated to providing compassionate care, but we cannot do so effectively or safely in an environment rife with violence and overcrowding.

SB 537 is critical for addressing these urgent issues. It offers much-needed measures to enhance safety and improve working conditions for healthcare professionals. By supporting this bill, you will be taking a crucial step towards protecting those who are dedicated to protecting the health of our community.

I urge you to vote in favor of SB 537. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Anthony Kyle BSN, RN, CEN

OHSU Adult Emergency Services