

Submitter: Erica Swartz
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Health Care
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB537

Dear Chair Patterson, Vice-Chair Hayden and members of the Senate Committee on Health Care,

I am writing to you in support of SB 537. As a proud Oregon Nurses Association member with over 16 years of hospital nursing experience, I have heard many stories from my peers about being victims of workplace violence.

A few years ago, on my unit, a patient's parent threatened to bring a weapon back to the hospital and lethally harm staff. The response was slow and the hospital made very little effort to hear from frontline staff. When nurses were finally included and I voiced my concerns about safety for other patients and staff, I was told that I needed to take a trauma informed class. Having my safety concerns so disrespectfully dismissed was eye opening.

In our most recent contract negotiations, we won language about the formation of a workplace violence and safety committee. Over 1.5 years later this is barely getting up and going. What a disservice!

These examples show me that healthcare organizations need laws to drive the work of violence prevention. SB 537 importantly directs the collection of data so that we can truly define & understand the problem and look at effectiveness of interventions. The bill defines violence in statute and covers multiple types of care settings (e.g. hospital, ambulatory and home care). The bill requires accountability in reporting of incidents and overall data. It also lays out steps for responses to violence when it does occur.

This bill is an important step forward in workplace violence prevention. It helps to protect healthcare workers and the environments in which we care for our communities. We deserve to show up to our jobs without fear of being harmed. I urge you to support SB 537. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Erica Swartz RN