

TRAVIS NELSON
STATE REPRESENTATIVE
HOUSE DISTRICT 44
NORTH/NORTHEAST PORTLAND



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Testimony in Support of House Bill 2794-1

Chair-Nosse, Vice-Chair Javadi and Members of the House Committee of Behavioral Health and Healthcare,

My name is Travis Nelson, State Representative for House District 44, North and Northeast Portland. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of HB 2794 with the -1 amendment. I come to you today not just as a legislator but as a nurse and as someone who's been with patients who have entrusted me with their life and yet knew nothing about me other than the fact that I had been assigned as their nurse.

I would like to be abundantly clear for the record: this legislation is not an attack on hospitals. I have worked in hospitals. I know the pressure, the pace, the complexity of delivering care in today's system. And this bill is not about blame—it is about protection. It is about protecting patients when something goes wrong and protecting the voices of nurses and healthcare workers who speak up because they care deeply about those they serve.

This legislation was born from a real and troubling event involving a hospital system—one that also operates facilities here in Oregon. About a year and a half ago, this hospital system made a switch to a new IV catheter. If you don't know, an IV catheter is the little thing they usually put in your arm to give you fluid when you are hospitalized. Almost immediately after the switch, providers began reporting serious problems—IVs were coming apart, patients were experiencing vascular inflammation, infiltration and pain. These weren't isolated complaints. There were reportedly hundreds. The hospital system did a survey and, in the end, gathered over 2,000 responses from concerned providers.

Eventually, the hospital system acknowledged the issue and made the decision to stop using the IVs—but it took three months to fully transition...three months. I really want you to imagine being a provider during those three months—knowing the equipment you are using is causing harm and having to look your patient in the eye while not being able to tell them that the device you are putting in their body may cause them harm.

As a nurse, that's heartbreaking. We're trained to advocate for our patients and to be their voice when they are most vulnerable. We also carry a sacred duty: to do no harm and to uphold the highest ethical standards. But when that voice is ignored, or lost in a system that moves too slowly, it is the patients who pay the price. And when we're talking about healthcare, about hospitals in our own state, what matters more than patient safety?

When there's a food recall, we don't wait three months to take it off the shelves. We act immediately—out of an abundance of caution—because health and safety matter. Should the same urgency not apply in our healthcare facilities? And when one nurse is raising a concern, it should matter. Hundreds ringing the alarm is a deafening call to action.

House Bill 2794 -1 creates the kind of structure that ensures when concerns about medical devices arise, they're not lost in chaos or buried in red tape. It makes sure those concerns are heard, recorded, and acted on. Let me walk you through what this bill does:

First:

It requires hospitals and long-term care facilities to establish a clear process for staff to report faulty or dangerous equipment.

- Ask yourself: If you or your loved one was in a hospital bed and a provider noticed something was wrong with the equipment, would you not want them to have a clear and safe way to report it? And know with confidence that that their concern would be heard by their superiors?

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It also ensures those reports are saved for at least five years.

- Why five years? Because problems do not always show up overnight. Faulty devices can harm multiple patients before patterns emerge. What happens when those patterns are wiped from memory? What accountability is even possible without a paper trail?

It also prohibits retaliation against staff who file reports—internally or to OHA. In looking into the matter that inspired the bill, I talked to many nurses. Almost all of them were comfortable talking to me off the record, but were fearful of retaliation.

This bill also uses OHA's existing complaint system to provide an additional layer of oversight when needed.

- This is just about strengthening the tools we already have without reinventing the wheel.

And it gives patients the right to ask whether a device used in their care has been the subject of prior safety concerns... and get a truthful answer.

- If a patient believes something went wrong with a device or equipment, they should not be met with silence. They should be met with answers. Honest ones. Because without that, we are not just failing to be transparent—we are failing to protect people. In working on this bill, I was surprised to learn that we have nothing in statute that requires a healthcare facility to answer truthfully if a patient suspects that devices or equipment causes harm. As a patient, you often have to litigate if you want answers.

I know people get tired of me talking about needing more transparency in our healthcare system, but this is how we build a safer system – not through fear or finger-pointing, but by simply making space for truth, accountability, and urgent action when it matters most.

And when we're pricking, prodding, and placing devices into people who trust this system with their lives, there is no room for silence, delay, or dismissal. We owe them better. We owe them safety. We owe them the truth. Opposition may be here today and speak to the hospital system responding relatively quickly. They may point to internal protocols already in place. But if it truly had been swift, thousands of patients would not have been exposed to defective Intravenous catheters for months. And if the protocols always worked, I wouldn't be here.

I hope this never happens again in our state. I want to believe it won't. But the truth is it has happened before, and it might happen again here in Oregon if we don't take action. We owe it to Oregonians to ensure preventive action so that they are safe when they or a loved one enters the hospital.

Please support HB 2794-1 because every person deserves to receive safe, compassionate care—every time, every touch.

Thank you,

State Representative Travis Nelson
House District 44, North/NE Portland