



In Support of SB 537 with a forthcoming -4 amendment

April 23, 2025

Senate Committee on Rules

Good afternoon Chair Jama, Vice-Chair Bonham, and Committee Members:

My name is Paige Spence and I am the Director of Government Relations for the Oregon Nurses Association. We represent nearly 24,000 nurses and clinicians across the state.

Thank you for hearing Senate Bill 537 today, which will prevent workplace violence against healthcare workers and improve victim support when violence does occur both in hospitals and home health care settings. SB 537 is supported by several provider organizations as well as my colleagues who you'll hear from today.

We are here before you in Senate Rules following a March 20 public hearing in the Senate Health Care Committee followed by a work session on April 3. We are here because we are awaiting a -4 from legislative counsel to replace the -3 that is posted on OLIS. I will share that -4 as soon as Senator Patterson has it back.

I deeply appreciate having more time to get the policy just right, as the -4 includes components that alleviate concerns from the Oregon Home Care Association as well as some hospitals. The -4 is substantially similar to the -3 but it allows for more flexibility in shatterproof barriers, allows a bit more time for implementation, and includes the Oregon State Hospital – my colleagues will speak more to that piece.

Overall, SB 537 as a base bill and the anticipated -4 amendment aim to protect healthcare workers from violence, as they experience 5 times more workplace violence than workers in any other industry. For example, 70-80% of workers in emergency departments report verbal or physical assaults annually. Behavioral health units and psychiatric facilities face heightened risk due to unpredictable patient behavior and inadequate staffing. And 20% of home health nurses report physical assaults in the past year.

I have included specifics of the bill and what the -4 specifically adds in my testimony that I've uploaded to OLIS, but of course I'm happy to answer walk through that today if requested or answer any specific questions.

Thank you.



SB 537 DOES THE FOLLOWING:

SOLUTIONS IN SB 537 -4

- Defines workplace violence in statute.
- Prevents violence in hospitals including the Oregon State Hospital. Promotes common sense safety improvements including de-escalation training, behavioral health patient flags both physically outside the patient's room and in the electronic medical records to make care safer for both patients and workers, and annual review of safety plans.
- Prevents violence in home health and hospice through the use of intake risk assessments, panic buttons, an additional clinician when needed, and allowing for charting outside of the home.
- Supports victims of workplace violence by offering post-incident interviews, trauma counseling, first aid, and wage compensation when violence disrupts the remainder of a worker's shift.
- Increases transparency through improved reporting which provides data to the legislature to inform policymaking.

SUMMARY OF -4 AMENDMENT AS COMPARED TO BASE BILL

- Includes staff at the Oregon State Hospital to certain prevention and response measures. Stakeholders have worked with the Oregon Health Authority on language.
- Removes provision that labor union staff may participate in safety committees.
- Pushes implementation date to January 1, 2026 rather than 91 days after *sine die* to allow employers more time to comply.
- Allows for "shatterproof barriers" rather than "bulletproof glass" in emergency department intake areas.
- Allows additional flexibility for support in hospital safety trainings.
- Revises intake questionnaire for home health and hospice new patients.
- Reduces administrative burden.