

Submitter: Erica Swartz
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Health Care
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1570

Dear Chair Patterson, Vice-Chair Hayden and members of the committee,

My name is Erica Swartz and I have been a registered nurse for over 17 years at a large metro area hospital. I am a proud member of the Oregon Nurses Association and a member of ONA's Cabinet on Health Policy. I am writing today in strong support of Senate Bill 1570, Healthcare without Fear.

Nurses are seeing and experiencing the same feelings as everyone else - worry, uncertainty, grief. The current culture of fear impedes healthcare access and provision of care and it must stop now. Every member of our community has the right to access healthcare unafraid. Nurses have the right to provide care in facilities that honor the autonomy of patients. Our own code of ethics compels us to advocate for therapeutic environments for informed decision making which cannot happen under conditions of duress.

In this current climate, with the rescindment of protected areas, we see how unaccountable federal behavior threatens our ability to provide comprehensive care to our communities. Patients are afraid to access care. Nurses fear the health outcomes for patients under stress as well as our own safety if/when federal agents are present. We want to take care you, your loved ones, your community members without the imposed pressure of federal agent overreach and use of force.

This bill creates accountability, protection and structure. The bill ensures defined private spaces for care, meaning no unfettered access to healthcare spaces by federal agents. Nurses and other providers will be able to have conversations with patients in private, so they may share information without being monitored and observed.

The bill recognizes the important role of the nurse as an advocate. It protects us in sharing knowledge, community resources and education materials with our patients. We have the right and obligation to share these with the people for whom we care. The bill prohibits retaliation against us by employers for doing so.

In the face of fear we choose protecting access.
In the face of uncertainty we choose accountability.

We choose to stand up for the rights of patients and providers.
I ask you to support Senate Bill 1570, Healthcare Without Fear.

Thank you.