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Oregon Workplace Violence Prevention Bill Clears First Legislative Hurdle
Senate Committee Members Vote to Address Growing Epidemic of Workplace Violence Confronting Nurses and Health Care Workers

(SALEM, Ore.) – The Oregon Nurses Association (ONA) applauds members of the Oregon Senate Health Care Committee who unanimously voted to approve the Oregon Health Care Worker Protection Act (Senate Bill 823) today. Passing the Oregon Health Care Worker Protection Act is critical to end the growing epidemic of workplace violence health care providers face every day. In the U.S., one in four nurses are physically assaulted every year. Overall, health care workers suffer four times more serious injuries from violence than other private sector workers and violent incidents in health care are increasing.

“Nurses and health care workers are punched, kicked, groped, grabbed, choked, slapped, spit on and threatened with alarming regularity,” said Nancy MacMorris-Adix, a certified nurse midwife and co-chair of ONA’s Cabinet on Health Policy. “This can’t continue. We must do more to protect the people who care for us in our most vulnerable hours. The Oregon Health Care Worker Protection Act is necessary to help stop the violence and keep caregivers and patients safe.”

The Oregon Health Care Worker Protection Act would require health care facilities to increase reporting and tracking of violent incidents and create comprehensive security plans based on recognized standards. The bill would also give nurses and other frontline workers a voice in designing and implementing violence prevention programs and reinforces workers’ right to report violent incidents without fear of retaliation.

“When I chose nursing as my career, I never imagined the pain and fear nurses and health care workers have to live with,” said Jacqueline Dillon a medical-surgical nurse
and member of ONA’s Board of Directors. “I’ve had a patient grab me by the neck and force my head down so he can choke me with a stethoscope. This is one of dozens of violent incidents my coworkers and I have worked through. Sadly, these experiences are not unique. This is the reality caregivers face every day.”

“No one should work in fear, wondering if they’re going to become a victim,” said Cheryl Cosgrove, an intensive care nurse and member of ONA’s Cabinet on Health Policy. “Workplace violence is often predictable and preventable. By increasing transparency, strengthening security and adding nurses’ voices to safety reviews, the Oregon Health Care Worker Protection Act will help prevent violent attacks so nurses can concentrate on our patients.”

The Oregon Nurses Association developed the Oregon Health Care Worker Protection Act with support from hospitals and other statewide health care organizations. The act would make four major improvements to state law.

- **Increases Transparency**: It allows nurses and other health care workers to review health care facilities’ workplace violence reports to ensure security issues are addressed.
- **Strengthens Security Plans**: Requires health care facilities to establish comprehensive violence prevention plans and conduct regular safety reviews using recognized standards.
- **Creates Team-Based Solutions**: Ensures nurses and other frontline workers who are most at risk for violent incidents are part of the safety teams which create and implement workplace violence prevention plans.
- **Protects Workers’ Right to Report**: Reinforces workers’ right to report violent incidents without fear of employer retaliation.

Following today’s unanimous committee vote, the Oregon Health Care Worker Protection Act will move on to the full senate.

**The Oregon Nurses Association (ONA)** is the state’s largest and most influential nursing organization. It is a professional association and labor union which represents nearly 15,000 nurses across the state. ONA’s mission is to advocate for nursing, quality health care and healthy communities. For more information visit [www.OregonRN.org](http://www.OregonRN.org).