

February 14<sup>th</sup>, 2007

Good morning Senator Handley, Representative Sayers, and the members of the Public Health Committee. My name is Kristine Keller and I am Registered Nurse and a candidate for a Master's Degree in Nursing as a Forensic Clinical Nurse Specialist (FCNS), also referred to as forensic nurse. I have worked in the Emergency Department (ED) for over four years and have been SANE-SAFE certified for six months. I have written this testimony to explain the importance of Bill 1013, an act requiring acute care hospitals to make forensic nursing services available to patients.

Working in the ED has exposed me to patients suffering from intimate partner violence (IPV), sexual assault (SA), and various types of trauma. These patients require a variety of different medical, emotional and legal services from the hospital. These patients will directly benefit from the knowledge and skills a forensic nurse can provide. The ED is by nature a chaotic environment where the understaffed nurses are already overworked. These nurses unfortunately cannot adequately care for the patient with forensic needs.

On any given day an ED nurse has approximately 10 patients, simple math tells us that breaks down to 6 minutes per patient each hour. Victims of abuse or trauma require more time than that. Here is an example to further demonstrate my case. A 33 year old woman arrives in the ED after being sexually assaulted. She is scared, distraught and confused. The loud and chaotic environment further exacerbates these emotions. The nurse assigned to this patient is caring for ten other patients, all who require various medications and medical interventions. Some of these patients may even require life - saving interventions, which divert the nurse's attention from the confused, scared and upset abused patient. A forensic nurse could provide required forensic interventions and follow the care of this patient from admission to discharge. Forensic nurses will take the burden off the overworked ED nurse and provide holistic care to patients with forensic needs.

A forensic nurse will be the common thread for these patients and be a liaison between the medical, mental health, and legal teams assigned to care for this patient. Assessing the forensic patient, contacting law enforcement and social work, evidence collection, photography, and initiating chain of custody are just several of the interventions a forensic nurse can provide.

Respectfully Submitted,



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