

Senator Hadley, Representative Sayers and members of the Public Health Committee:

My name is Ann Gandhi. I am a registered nurse and am a candidate for a masters degree in forensic nursing at Quinnipiac University. I wish to speak to you today in regards to bill RB 1013.

Violence is and always will be a concern for hospitals across the country. It is a problem that surrounds us all and as said by the World Health Organization in 2002, "violence places a massive burden on national economies, costing countries billions of US dollars each year in health care, law enforcement and lost productivity". In the face of such issues surrounding violence it is important to define the role of healthcare and its responsibility to those affected by the phenomenon. It is imperative that the state of Connecticut justly care for the populations involved in violent and criminal acts. These populations include but certainly are not limited to victims of crimes such as elder abuse, child abuse and intimate partner violence to name only a very few. Though with the time constraints and the already demanding practice of hospital nurses, there is no provider left to manage, care or advocate for these populations. This is exactly why a forensic nurse is needed.

Forensic nursing is responsible for the nexus where healthcare and the law intersect. With these skills forensic nurses can provide a bridge between law enforcement and healthcare providers- a gap for which there is currently no liaison. He or she is able to assess and care for survivors of crimes or traumas, patients who have crime related injuries and the families of those involved. They are also responsible for the documentation and collection of evidence that is forensically relevant to the case as well as the management of that evidence so as to preserve the integral data properly. Other specific interventions that a forensic nurse may provide are skills in forensic photography, assessment of patterns of injury, behavior and psychopathology assessment, interpretation of blunt or sharp force trauma, aspects of drug abuse, assistance and education on tissue and organ donation and planning care to include, safety, prevention, referral and follow-up forensic services. Finally he or she is trained in giving expert witness testimony, something for which many other health care staff are not.

A hospital in possession of a forensic nurse who is endowed with the previously stated skills can function to meet not only the administrative standard of care but the moral and ethical standard as well. So, members of the committee, I implore you not to let the vulnerable populations receive substandard care nor to continue to burden an already strained health care staff by implementing bill 1013.