



Testimony of
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SB 970 An Act Concerning Workplace Violence and Prevention in Health Care Settings

Public Health Committee
February 23, 2011

Good afternoon Senator Stillman, Representative Ritter and members of the Public Health Committee. My name is Dale Cunningham and I am a Registered Nurse in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit at Lawrence and Memorial Hospital in New London. As well as being a nurse at the hospital, I am the treasurer of the nurses' union, representing approximately 500 members. I am here today to testify in favor of SB 970 An Act Concerning Workplace Violence Prevention and Response in Health Care Settings.

Physicians, nurses, nurse technicians, therapists and even clerical employees face a certain level of danger when they work in a hospital or other sizeable healthcare facility. These professionals operate in a dynamic work environment, which is often complicated by the emotional stresses experienced and projected by the patients they treat and the families they counsel. This is a hazard of the job, but frontline workers and administrators can come together to make these risks manageable. SB 970 helps make this happen.

I have been a member of Lawrence and Memorial's safety committee for ten years. After many complaints and grievances, especially from workers in the Emergency Department, the hospital has moved to improve environmental conditions and increase security throughout the hospital in order to prevent violent incidents. The hospital has even implemented several OSHA recommendations at the suggestion of the safety committee. We still struggle with appropriate staffing levels, but our safety committee, and the progress it has made, is proof that the provisions in SB 970 can be implemented without significant obstacles.

At L&M I have experienced workplace violence on the Neonatal and Pediatric Units when dealing families of infants and children that are critically ill or placed in protective custody with the Department of Children and Families. Stressful situations can be very tense and not all people deal well with that level of stress. Anxiety and fear can also drive the emotions of patients and their loved ones.

I urge you to make the safety of hospital employees, patients, families and visitors a priority and support SB 970. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.