



Danbury Nurses' Union Unit #47 Local 5047

AFT-CT, AFT Healthcare, AFL- CIO

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Written Testimony of

Jane Sturges, RN, BSN

Danbury Nurses' Union Unit #47, AFT Local 5047, AFL-CIO

**To Representative Betsy Ritter, Senator Andrea Stillman
and Members of the Public Health Committee**

**Re: S.B. No 970 AN ACT CONCERNING WORK PLACE VIOLENCE
PREVENTION AND RESPONSE IN HEALTH CARE SETTINGS.**

February 23, 2011

My name is Jane Sturges and I work as a staff nurse on the In Patient Psychiatric Unit at Danbury Hospital, Danbury CT. Three years ago on New Year's Eve, I was struck by a patient who had thrown a chair and broke a window in the patient's dining room. I was not aware of this event because our unit is two floors and I was upstairs at the time of the incident. Security was called and the patient was escorted upstairs which is where I was at the time. In an attempt to place the patient in our quiet room where he could deescalate and regain self control, the patient managed to strike me in the left shoulder with three security guards present. Luckily, I did not sustain any serious injury from the occurrence. However, the patient remained on our unit for another month. During that time the patient continued to make verbal threats to push me down the stairwell. The only support that I received from management was that I could arrange to use some of my accumulated sick or vacation time until the patient had been discharged. I was also informed that I could not press charges against the patient because it is a psychiatric unit.

I chose to stay a work and deal with the threats on a daily basis because I did not feel I should have to use my time. I thought my employer had a duty to provide a safe work environment where threats would not be tolerated.

Management also made it clear that psychiatry, by nature, can be a dangerous unit and that I was aware of this when I signed up for the position. This may be so, but it does not mean that the hospital shouldn't have sufficient, appropriately trained staff at all times including a security guard on the floor to help with a more immediate response to emergencies.

As I said, I was lucky not to have received any serious injuries. Others have however. About twelve years ago a nurse was attacked, beaten badly and sustained serious injuries and left the field of psychiatric nursing because of it. More recently another nurse was punched in the face, knocked down and broke her hip.

We cannot continue to allow violence in the workplace such as this to continue. Nurses and other healthcare professionals need to feel safe in their work environment to do the necessary work to heal our patients. At the same time, however, we need to be protected and feel confident that our employer stands behind us 100%.

With the challenging economic times, it is more important than ever to have a safe environment, not only for employees, but for our patients so that they will choose Danbury Hospital as their institution of care.

It is for these reasons that I strongly support and fight for the need for Senate Bill 970, to set a policy for a Work Place Violence Program in all Health Care Institutions. It is our right to feel safe and supported in the work place in order to do our job well.

Thank you.

Respectfully,
Jane Sturges
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