



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

Public Health Committee  
February 9, 2011

Good afternoon Senator Stillman, Representative Ritter and members of the Public Health Committee. My name is Lynn Betta and I am a Registered Nurse, employed 11 years at Lawrence Memorial Hospital. I am here to testify in support of SB 970 An Act Concerning Workplace Violence and Prevention in Health Care Settings.

I currently work in the emergency room and I specialize in crisis intervention. I care for patients coming in for psychiatric evaluations for various reasons. I also care for intoxicated patients and patients that have used various substances who often arrive confused and combative. Many of my patients arrive with the police.

This past summer I witnessed a violent assault on one of our social workers. An 18 year old man with a psychiatric history was brought in by the police for an evaluation. The social worker entered the room at which time the patient asked to make a phone call. He was denied this request, as the social worker explained she needed to speak with him first. Then the patient jumped over the rail of the stretcher and started punching the worker. She fell to the ground when attempting to flee and he grabbed her by the hair and pulled her down the hall. Luckily she had a clipboard which she held over her face but she was punched in the neck several times. When security arrived, the patient was in need of being pepper sprayed as he would not back down.

I later found out that this young man had assaulted his neighbor earlier that day. This man had also bit one of the hospital security guards in the forehead on a previous visit, but this was not known to the staff that day. I believe if there was a standard for reporting such incidents, staff would have been aware of this man's history and more precautions would have been taken to keep employees safe.

Our hospital currently has a safety committee that meets monthly. I sit on this committee. However, there is so much on the agenda that there is not enough time to spend on this issue alone. I believe violence in the healthcare setting such as this should be reportable to an entity other than the hospital administration. I have requested, several times, more in depth training and increased security presence because the example I gave is unfortunately one of many incidents. Many close calls have come our way and verbal threats occur regularly.

The Public Health Department, General Assembly and the public at large should be aware that safety is often compromised in settings such as this. If left to the hospital administration, I

believe these things will continue to go unreported in order to “protect” the organization’s reputation. I ask you to support SB 970 so that we, the healthcare workforce, may be protected.

Thank you again for the opportunity to speak today. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.