



Testimony of Keith Inrig, First Vice President

University Health Professionals, AFT Local 3837

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

Public Health Committee

February 23, 2011

Good afternoon Senator Stillman, Representative Ritter and members of the Public Health Committee. I am Keith Inrig, a Radiographer by trade. Presently I am the First Vice President for University Health Professionals, the labor union representing the 2,500 non-faculty professionals at UConn Health Center.

I am here to speak in favor of SB 970. Other hospitals can look to John Dempsey Hospital and UConn Health Center to see that the essence of this bill can and does work. Most of the components of this bill are in place or being implemented at the Health Center. Although a joint UHP and management Health and Safety committee has been dormant, we are already starting it up again. As well, the Health Center has a safety initiative underway. I feel it would be appropriate to add safety training, as SB 970 does, to the mandatory training already required.

Section 1 (f) prevents an employer from requiring an employee from treating or providing services to a patient who has verbally or physically abused or threatened him or her. This provision carries special meaning for me and my wife, who is also employed by UConn Health Center as a nurse.

Some years ago, a neighbor came into my garage. He assaulted me and threatened my wife. He is now serving time in prison for assaulting his mother and his aunt. He later came to John Dempsey Hospital for treatment as a prison inmate. My wife works in the pre-op area where his treatment would have started.

When the Department of Corrections managed care program was brought to Dempsey, our union, University Health Professionals, asked that inmates not be treated by any of their victims. Thankfully, the Department of Corrections agreed. My wife was given

appropriate duties in another area of the Procedure Center so that he would not see her and she was not forced to see him. This type of arrangement protects healthcare professionals, patients and the institution.

Working in a sizable healthcare facility can be a dangerous job. SB 970 requires management and frontline workers to come together to make the facility safer for everyone who spends time there. Let healthcare workers know you care about their safety. I urge you to support 970.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I would be happy to answer any questions.