

March 8, 2012

Testimony on SB154

**AN ACT CONCERNING STATE EMPLOYEES AND VIOLENCE AND ABUSIVE
CONDUCT IN THE WORKPLACE**

Dear Committee Members,

My name is Lynne Munday and I am a registered nurse. I have worked for the State of Connecticut for six years.

I am here to support SB 154, An Act Concerning State Employees and Violence and Abusive Conduct in the Workplace. I have been a witness to abusive conduct by a supervisor towards my colleagues and subsequently a target after reporting such behavior. I have worked in the private sector as well and have never experienced such an abusive environment as I have within my state agency.

The administrator was told of such behavior by many staff members and it was evident after meeting with him that not only does he tolerate this behavior but also allows and fosters this atmosphere of bullying, division, retaliation. This administrator and his subordinates have been given the autonomy and license to operate with aggression, disruptive behaviors and a spirit of invulnerability. This culture was in place well before I started to work there and when I asked my coworkers how long they had been working under these conditions, the answer was "seems like forever, we complained, but it is not worth the consequences." The retaliation is worse!" So many have learned not to say anything and just put up with it. I mention this because in the proposed bill you discuss having "the number" of complaints made to the DAS be reported along with the outcomes to the Commissioner. The problem is like many other forms of abuse, it is underreported.

In my workplace we are supervised by someone who has a need to control and lead through fear, intimidation and passive-aggressiveness. We have to deal with and accept being called by our last name, be verbally abused and intimidated, constant "staff- splitting", given "the silent treatment" , being glared at, and being falsely accused of errors leading to discipline in many situations. Sadly, my workplace is filled with hostility, verbal violence, intimidation, division and continued bullying. Several staff have modeled this behavior and so there is also conflict among certain coworkers.

My personal story begins with bearing witness to such egregious acts towards others. One issue that makes my story unique is that in the beginning I was someone who was not a target. I was given preferential treatment; getting "perks"

such as extra overtime shifts, select job duties and job posts. I noticed the supervisor selectively enforcing rules and treating other staff members differently and many times unprofessionally. I was put in the position of "policing" and "monitoring" select coworkers and their work and asked to report back my findings. I was not the only one to be put in this impossible situation. I witnessed many of my coworkers that were targeted decline socially, psychologically, and some medically. I was upset that this was happening. For a targeted employee, bullying can cause stress and physical and mental ailments like high blood pressure, heart disease, post-traumatic stress syndrome, and in its worst-case scenario, violence or suicide. The abuse and subsequent repercussions also detract from the overall quality of life for the target, his or her family.

I believe that SB 154 is a good beginning to an issue that has become forefront in many citizens' minds, bullying. Whether it is in schools, homes or in the workplace, abuse should NEVER be tolerated.

I would like to see additional language added to the bill that touches on a person's physical or psychological vulnerabilities. As we all know from childhood, bullies usually prey on those they believe to be weaker. It is our responsibility to make Connecticut a healthy place to work. Looking forward, I ask the committee to please consider The Healthy Workplace Bill written by Suffolk University Law Professor, David Yamada. This is a comprehensive bill that addresses all of the issues we are discussing today.

In closing, it is my belief that violent acts such as suicide or homicide usually are committed by a person who is feels desperate. We are here today to ask that this committee be proactive and allow for this bill to pass thereby beginning a preventative approach that will begin to improve and sustain a healthy workplace environment for all its citizens.

Thank you,

Lynne Munday RN

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