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**Testimony of
Peter J. Karl, President & CEO
EASTERN CONNECTICUT HEALTH NETWORK (ECHN)**

Submitted to the
Public Health Committee
March 7, 2012 – Public Hearing

**In Support of Senate Bill 275:
An Act Concerning Workplace Violence Prevention and Reporting**

As President and CEO of Eastern Connecticut Health Network (ECHN) and as Secretary of the Connecticut Hospital Association's Executive Committee and Chairman of its Committee on Government Relations, I am writing to express our support of Senate Bill 275: AAC Workplace Violence Prevention and Reporting.

ECHN is a not-for-profit health care system serving 19 towns in eastern Connecticut. Our network of affiliates includes Manchester Memorial Hospital, Rockville General Hospital, Woodlake at Tolland Rehabilitation and Nursing Center, Eastern Connecticut Medical Professionals, Women's Center for Wellness, Visiting Nurse & Health Services of CT and Eastern Connecticut Cancer Institute. We employ over 2,500 people in eastern Connecticut.

Workplace violence has become a major public health concern. Health care workers are at high risk because patients and family members they care for may have medical, emotional or social issues. Physical assaults frequently occur when medical service is denied, a patient is involuntary admitted to the hospital and when certain restrictions are placed on an unwilling patient. And hospitals have many open access points requiring employees to be extra vigilant and cognizant of their surroundings at all times.

Because of the rise in workplace violence, ECHN encourages its staff to be as prepared as possible should a hostile situation occur within any of our inpatient or outpatient facilities. We updated our weapons and workplace violence policy. We established a

new hospital code – Code Silver – which provides an immediate and effective response to an armed subject/active shooter situation and to give guidance to staff. We established an internal working group on workplace violence. And we keep our staff engaged and apprised of new laws and internal policies that will maximize everyone’s safety at our inpatient and outpatient facilities.

During the 2011 session, SB 970 (Public Act 11-175), *An Act Concerning Workplace Violence Prevention And Response In Health Care Settings*, received unanimous support by the House and Senate and was signed into law by the Governor. Frankly, the new law is a major step forward in enhancing the health care community’s efforts to reduce and prevent violence in the workplace.

However, while last year’s bill was a great first step, when implemented, the provisions describing when to call police caused confusion. Now that we have several months of experience in complying with Public Act 11-175, Connecticut hospitals are in a better position to clarify the details in a way that will both enhance the law and protect persons at risk of being inadvertently swept up into law enforcement proceedings.

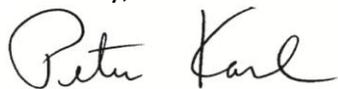
ECHN, CHA and other Connecticut hospitals want the goals of Public Act 11-175 to be fully realized. That is why we believe strongly that SB 275 proposed this session will help us do just that.

SB 275 will clarify when law enforcement must be called by establishing a clear threshold for notifying police when an incident occurs, based on the harm that is suffered by a workforce member.

All of the following will require a mandatory call to the police: death, loss of consciousness, choking of a person such that air or blood is cut off, or any injury that requires medical attention (beyond first aid), as well as any verbal threat of inflicting any of those injuries or harms when a health care employer reasonably believes the threat is real, immediate, and that the aggressor is capable of carrying it out.

On behalf of ECHN and the Connecticut Hospital Association, thank you for your consideration of our testimony and we hope you will support SB 275: AAC Workplace Violence Prevention and Reporting.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Peter Karl". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Peter J. Karl
President & CEO

