

Testimony of
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SB 275 – An Act Concerning Workplace Violence and Reporting

Public Health Committee
March 7, 2012

Good morning Senator Gerratana, Representative Ritter and members of the Public Health Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to address you today. My name is John Brady and I'm a Registered Nurse working in the Emergency Department at Backus Hospital in Norwich. I come before you to ask for your help.

My colleagues and I face the danger of physical and verbal attacks on a daily basis. It is critical to our safety that Connecticut's workplace violence laws be strong. Those who dedicate themselves to the care of others need and deserve the ability to work without our lives being threatened. I have seen verbal and physical attacks against nurses and other health care workers leave them so traumatized that they have left bedside nursing.

I'd like to share with you just one example:

The patient was a big man, well over six feet tall. His arms were so large that the blood pressure cuff could not encircle his upper arm and I had to use his forearm instead. He was depressed and had expressed thoughts of suicide to a friend. He was changed out of his street clothes and placed under constant observation. He waited in a seclusion room, resting on a stretcher, his back towards the camera used to observe him.

He had been waiting for a couple of hours for the psych clinician to speak with him. Suddenly, the person observing him yelled out for help! With his back to the camera, the patient had managed to tie a bed sheet into a noose, tie it to the stretcher rail, place it around his neck, and was starting to lay himself on the floor.

I rushed to the bedside and struggled to pull the noose up and over his head. Somehow I was successful. At this point he jumped to his feet and wrapped his massive forearm around my head, pulling my head towards his waist in a headlock.

To this day I don't know why he didn't snap my neck. Maybe he only wanted attention, maybe it was because I was too afraid to resist, too weak to break his hold, or maybe I'm here before you today only because security arrived just in time to prevent it.

It's taken me time to recover emotionally from this attack and yet under the proposed changes I am not sure it would even meet the definition of an "act of violence". There was no loss of life, consciousness, injury requiring treatment, impediment of my breathing, or blood circulation, nor was I restrained by the throat or neck or verbally threatened.

Yet with one twist of my head he could have snapped my neck.

This is just one example of what happens day in and day out in hospitals across Connecticut.

Health care workers are often discouraged from reporting to police.

I urge you to keep Connecticut's work place violence laws strong, for my sake, the sake of my colleagues, and the sake of the patients and visitors to our hospitals.

Thank you for your time.