

March 8, 2012

CT Labor and Public Employees Committee

SB 154 An Act Concerning State Employees and Violence and Abusive Conduct in the Workplace

Good Afternoon,

My name is Raymond Castro and I am a physician. I have been employed by the State of Connecticut for the past eight years.

I have first-hand knowledge of being a target of abusive conduct in the work place otherwise known as bullying both at a personal level and this offensive behavior directed toward my colleagues. This happens at any level, administrators, supervisors, physicians, nurses etc. It also takes many forms, from interference with practice, false accusations of errors, and bosses making up or changing rules as they choose.

One personal experience I had was when a nursing supervisor physically removed a patient from my exam room and stated "I'll take care of this". She took the patient into another exam room right in the middle of my exam. I was totally taken aback at this behavior and when I asked the nurse whom I was working with what was happening they responded, "Oh that's just how she is. That is the culture here, she does whatever she wants". This undermining of my practice is unacceptable and when I went to her boss with the problem, nothing was done. She continues to come into my office at will and she goes through my charting, disrupts my practice and causes me grief. She has yelled at me and has used offensive language towards me in front of patients and staff. I also have experienced retaliatory behaviors for reporting her. She has gone out of her way to sabotage my work, making sure that I am missing important information to do my job and has repeatedly caused me angst. She gives me the silent treatment and discusses my practice with other staff members.

Why is this allowed to happen? To quote an attorney, "there are no laws that say that they have to play nice in the sand box." Well it is time for them to learn how to play nice! A good start would be to pass this bill and include explicit assurance for no retaliation for reporting.

Who are the perpetrators? Usually somebody that has been employed for a long time and has achieved a measure of power. For some strange reason the culture seems to be the more time you have in state service the more control you have over other employees. Maybe this is why a Licensed Practical Nurse with two years at a vocational school or a nursing supervisor with a bachelor's degree is allowed by the administration who by the way has a MA in Social Work to give me, a medical doctor, direction in my practice. This is just a small example of what I must endure, my colleagues have horror stories as well.

What is the harm? There is harm to the individual who is afraid to lose his job or else afraid to leave on a bad note which will affect future employment elsewhere. Not to mention the psychological impact of going to a job every day where you feel like you must "fight for your life". The medical implications of

this amount of stress on a person are no secret. I have personal knowledge of otherwise normal people at my workplace that have been forced to seek medical and/or psychiatric intervention In order to understand that it is not their fault and to learn to cope with the abusive conduct they must endure to keep their job. This is absurd.

In general, targets are those employees that are more highly trained and qualified. They are valuable employees that our laws should protect. Complains generate a cursory investigation and nothing is done. This results in high turnover, lawsuits and unnecessary bad publicity. The cost of allowing abusive conduct to continue is enormous. Think about the high turnover rates, cost to train new staff, sick time and call out pay.

In closing, I would like to address violence in the workplace. This is the result of not dealing with the abuse in the first place.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Raymond Castro MD". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Raymond Castro MD

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