

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

My name is Laura Olsen from Ashford.

I am in favor of Bill 6879 – AN ACT CONCERNING HAZARDOUS DUTY AND CERTAIN DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS STAFF.

I am an Administrative Assistant currently working at the Carl Robinson Correctional Institution. I have been with the Department of Correction for over 25 years. During this time I have worked in many different capacities with the majority of my time inside facilities.

Clerical staff walk compounds, interact with inmates with no radios or body alarms. Clerical staff must attend and participate in mandated training alongside our co-workers. We are not exempt from this training as we interact with inmates.

Yes, clerical are minimally recognized with a \$.65 per hour stipend when we are physically working at the facility. Why it is that clerical staff are judged differently, I cannot answer that. While reported claims of harassment, threats or assaults to the approximately 165 clericals may not seem substantial, the risks are real. I can speak for all clericals in saying we are truly thankful that none of us have been seriously assaulted. The Department has staff that are not assigned to a facility and yet are recognized as Hazardous Duty. Please note, NP3 clerical staff are the only staff that work inside the facility that are not considered hazardous duty. Why is this? Please note the majority of the NP3 Clerical Union is comprised of mostly females. I'm not saying that absolutely plays a part in the decision, however, we are working a male dominant environment. **Any** staff member can find themselves in a situation as inmates are unpredictable.

Fortunately I have not been physically assaulted by an inmate. However, I have been verbally threatened and also approached by ex-offenders outside of my work establishment. I have been verbally abused/disrespected on countless occasions.

I know some of you have taken the Commissioner up on the Yearly Legislative Facility Tours. If you have not toured our facilities, I would encourage you do so. Please make it point to ask where the clerical staff are assigned and take the time to visit. You will see firsthand our work sites and that we are working side by side with hazardous duty staff.

You may ask why is this issue being raised now and what has changed? The answer is, nothing has changed – we have always been subjected to these conditions. Clerical have tried in the past to right the wrong but I believe because there are so few of us and the lack of support received, many are discouraged to stand up for themselves.

I consider myself and am treated by my co-workers, as part of facility team. As such, we all work together for a common goal.....do our job and go home safely each day to our family.