

Good morning,

My name is Chad Rioux and I am the Director of Security at Charlotte Hungerford Hospital in Torrington, CT. I am writing in reference to, and in support of, proposed bill #110 “Threats and assaults against hospital workers”.

In the 14 months that I have worked in a hospital I have gained a tremendous respect for healthcare workers, seeing first-hand the threats, violence and aggressive behavior that they deal with on a daily basis – all while attempting to help and care for patients/individuals. It is common place while dealing with patients for healthcare workers to deal with physical violence and to be spit on, punched, slapped, kicked or bit; and also to deal with verbal assaults by being threatened with violence, assault and/or death. Healthcare workers are an extremely caring group of individuals that come to work to try and heal people that are feeling at their worst – they should not need to fear for their safety, well-being or life while they attempt to perform their job duties.

While I have worked at the hospital I have heard patients threaten to rape, dismember, stalk and murder hospital employees. I have heard threats such as: “If you come near me with that needle I am going to rape you”, “If you don’t let me leave I’m going to come back and shoot up this place”, “I’m going to kill you and piss on your grave”, “If I come back here I will make this place the next Sandy Hook”. Of course some threats are merely individuals that are upset and idly blowing off steam, but why should a healthcare worker be the one to decide which threat is credible and which threat is idle? If we have learned anything from past events it is that the “idle” threats are usually the ones that come to fruition – and a healthcare worker should not have to live with that on their conscious because they were tasked with making a judgment call.

I feel that mandatory reporting would help cover many concerns/issues:

First - it would take the decision away from the healthcare worker. Many healthcare workers are extremely compassionate and caring, and feel “bad” if they have to press charges against a patient. Many healthcare workers are also not sure at what point the threat has crossed from idle to credible.

Second - it would make it more consistent. Currently, 2 different patients could make the same verbal threat; however, with healthcare workers making the decision it is possible for only one patient to be reported. Mandatory reporting would make enforcement much more consistent.

Third - it would send a message to the public/patients/visitors that hospitals take all threats seriously and that they do not have the right to threaten anyone no matter how upset they are. People need to see that it is taken seriously, and that there are consequences for their actions. Most schools now have “zero tolerance” policies when it comes to threats, so it would make sense for hospitals to be covered under that same umbrella. If we hold children accountable for their actions/threats, it would make sense to hold adults accountable for their actions/threats as well.

I am not suggesting that every patient that makes a threat needs to get locked up, I'm merely suggesting that mandatory reporting would take the responsibility off of the healthcare worker, and allow experienced/trained individuals (police, courts, etc) the ability to review the facts and determine how/if to proceed. If police/courts come to a decision that a threat was idle and they do not wish to proceed, at the very least the message was sent that it is unacceptable to make an idle threat, and due diligence was performed to look into the threat.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions, or wish to speak with me further regarding this issue.

Thank-you for your time.

Regards,

Chad E. Rioux
Director of Security
Charlotte Hungerford Hospital