



A Union of Professionals

AFT Healthcare 

Testimony of
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Public Health Committee
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SB 110 An Act Concerning a Study of Threats and Assaults Against Hospital Employees

Good afternoon Senator Gerratana, Representative Ritter and members of the Public Health Committee. My name is Donna Callicutt. I worked for Backus Hospital for 20 years as a Registered Nurse. I am also the past Treasurer for Backus Federation of Nurses, AFT local 5149. I am here to testify in favor of Senate Bill 110, An Act Concerning a Study of Threats and Assaults Against Hospital Employees.

I would like to begin with the reasons why this bill is so vital to everyone in this room, not just hospital employees. When I am finished, I am confident that you will have enough knowledge to vote “yes” without hesitation.

As I stated, I worked for Backus Hospital for over 20 years. My last day was Sunday, August 24th, 2014. On that day, Sara, another RN on my floor, was brutally assaulted by a patient. This was not a random act, not something unpredictable. During the previous week, he had assaulted other workers. He cracked a phone on an employee’s jaw multiple times as she tried to get him to release a nurse’s arms he was squeezing. He almost dragged four employees down cement stairs while naked and security was called numerous times to get him back in his room. The Friday before the assault, our boss was heard by Sara pleading on the phone: “Please get him off my floor. He is hurting my staff.” Our boss wrote a plan of care for him including telling us to not enter his room unless

we had a security guard with us. Unfortunately, she sent it to us by e-mail on Friday and no one was aware of the plan until after the assault on Sunday.

On the morning of the attack, he left his room, went past the sitter and found Sara in another patient's room. He put her in a chokehold and cracked her head more than eight times with a heavy medication scanning device until pulled off by another nurse. Sara believed she would die as he showed no signs of stopping. The patient lying in bed also feared for her life as she was paralyzed and thought he would attack her. The man ran off and was found outside after escaping onto the roof.

This bill will require the Department of Health to see the whole picture. They will be in a position to see the prevalence and response to threats and assaults. This will lead to helping hospitals develop tools to prevent suffering by staff and patients. Imagine your loved one in that bed, unable to move or defend themselves against a physically healthy, 250lb man wielding a weapon. The power of this bill can help us so much.

We are at a crucial turning point in public health. We can make a stand and stop this erosion of respect for healthcare workers by having abusive behavior monitored and evaluated. Hospitals will have to be accountable and show their response to threats and assaults against hospital employees.

It will be six months tomorrow since the assault and Backus Hospital has failed to provide the "assault protocol" they promised they would finish two months ago. I continue to refuse to work in an unsafe environment. Please support this bill. I am hoping to never hear about another 'Sara' again. Thank you.