



377 Research Parkway 2D
Meriden, CT 06450
203-238-1207
FAX (203) 238-3437
www.ctnurses.org

**TESTIMONY S.B. 110 AN ACT CONCERNING A STUDY ON REPORTS OF THREATS
AND ASSAULTS AGAINST HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES.**

**Public Health Committee Hearing
February 23, 2015**

Good Day, Senator Gerrantana, Representative Ritter and esteemed members of Public Health Committee.

Thank-you for the opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of the Connecticut Nurses' Association (CNA), the professional organization for registered nurses in Connecticut. I am Dr. Mary Jane Williams, past-president of the Connecticut Nurses' Association current chair of the Government Relations Committee and Professor Emeritus from CCSU.

I am providing testimony related to: **S.B. 110 AN ACT CONCERNING A STUDY ON REPORTS OF THREATS AND ASSAULTS AGAINST HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES.**

These incidents are increasing and are more prevalent in certain settings. In order to prepare this testimony in support of the concepts delineated in S.B. 110 **AN ACT CONCERNING A STUDY ON REPORTS OF THREATS AND ASSAULTS AGAINST HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES** we need to understand the literature.

What is workplace violence? Workplace violence is violence or the threat of violence against workers. It can occur at or outside the workplace and can range from threats

and verbal abuse to physical assaults and homicide, one of the leading causes of job-related deaths. However it manifests itself, workplace violence is a growing concern for employers and employees nationwide. (OSHA)

A report commissioned by the Department of Justice suggests that there are about 1.7 million incidents of workplace violence in the United States each year.^[6] Workplace assaults cause about 500,000 employees to lose 1,751,000 days of work annually.^[7] Employees who fall victim to workplace violence lose \$55 million annually in wages.^[8] However, workplace violence is not only costly to employees; it also adds up to a \$4.2 billion annual expense for employers as well.^[9] When indirect costs such as loss of public image, insurance, and lost productivity are added in; the total cost to employers increases to between \$6.4^[10]

Health care workers must routinely handle patients who are delirious, agitated, and even aggressive, especially on psychiatric units, in Emergency departments, and in nursing homes. Recent studies and news reports suggest that when agitation escalates into full-blown assault, nurses are often the victims. (AJN)

Violence in health care settings is a global issue that particularly threatens access to primary health care in developing countries, which already suffer shortages of health care workers. Underreporting of violence is also a widespread problem, the WHO report says, perhaps because workers see the abuse as an expression of patients' illnesses or as an acceptable part of the job. Another reason for the underreporting "is work pressures that do not allow time for staff to report." (WHO)

What should the victim do? Many nursing advocates say that all nurses who are victims of work-related physical assault should file a criminal report with the police and hold the perpetrators accountable. (WHO)

I believe that we have a responsibility to the individuals in our workforce and in our health care systems. We must support **S.B. 110 AN ACT CONCERNING A STUDY ON REPORTS OF THREATS AND ASSAULTS AGAINST HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES.**

But we must also look at enforcement of past legislation and determine why it is ineffective and what is needed to make it more effective in our work environments' safe.

Thank you

Mary Jane M Williams PhD., RN