

Proponent Testimony
Liz Carlton, MSN, RN, CCRN-K, CPHQ, CPPS
S.B. 235
March 23, 2017

Chairwoman McGinn and Members of the Committee:

I'm Liz Carlton, Senior Nursing Director for Quality, Safety & Regulatory Compliance at The University of Kansas Health System. I have over 30 years experience as a RN working in urban core or academic medical centers. I am board certified in healthcare quality and patient safety.

I have the privilege of working with a great team at our health system. We have over 10,000 employees, including 2,500 nurses.

We take care of patients from every county in Kansas, approximately 90 percent of the counties in Missouri and each of the 50 states. About 30 percent of our patients come from outside the Kansas City area. Thanks to the incredible people I work with every day, we have become a destination for healthcare in our region.

We provide care to some of the sickest and most complex patients in the country. Our staff deals with life and death situations every day. We use a combination of skill and compassion that has earned us a reputation as one of the best academic medical centers in the country.

We recruit and retain the very best staff because we have created an organization with a unique commitment to clinical excellence, customer service and teamwork. Our employee turnover is significantly lower than national averages, and our staff engagement is outstanding.

As a director of nursing, I am concerned that allowing concealed weapons in our hospital will have a dramatic impact on our ability to keep and recruit the best staff.

If we are the only hospital in the metropolitan area to allow concealed weapons, we have been told by many nurses they will leave. Nurses can work at any of the hospitals in the Kansas City area, none of which allow concealed weapons.

Nurses who want to continue their careers in academic medicine have numerous opportunities in Nebraska, Missouri, Colorado, Iowa or Oklahoma without the fear of concealed weapons.

A big, busy, complex, complicated academic medical center already qualifies as a high-stress environment. Patients and families are faced with some of the most difficult times of their lives.

Many of our patients are in crisis. They suffer from chronic illness or have just received a new diagnosis. Many lack reasoning ability, some lack mental capacity and some lack judgment, especially in stressful situations. Many of our patients have a dual diagnosis and are struggling with mental health issues as well as their medical diagnosis. Our nurses must be able to concentrate on providing the very best care to these incredibly complex patients in the safest environment possible.

Our nurses have dedicated their lives to saving and supporting the lives of others. Introducing guns into our hospital puts the lives of those serving others at an unnecessary risk.

We respectfully request you join me and our staff in support of the passage of SB 235.