

To: Members of the House Judiciary Committee

From: Morgan Stebens, MSN-FN, RN, SANE-A

Date: February 10, 2022

RE: House Bill 2620 – Proponent Testimony

Imagine for a moment that you are sitting in the emergency department with a loved one. You are being cared for by a nurse who is giving you their undivided attention and then you hear yelling and screaming from another room. That nurse must get up from taking care of your loved one and ensure that her fellow staff members are safe so that they can continue providing care to the rest of the patients and the department. That nurse had to pull their attention away from your loved one to ensure the safety of a fellow staff member in their department. What if your loved one was experiencing a serious disease process or illness that required that nurse's attention urgently? Your nurse is now engaged in trying to provide a safe environment in which to provide your loved one care. This is a daily occurrence in hospitals across the nation. I've been an emergency room nurse for seven years, the first time I was assaulted by a patient I had water thrown in my face because they were placed in a hallway to be cared for as opposed to in a room. The last two shifts I worked, in the hospital, I encountered physically aggressive patients one of which lunged at me. Additionally, an aggressive patient who required an individual to physically watch them to ensure their safety, came out of the room placed that person in a chokehold, broke his shoulder, and in addition to the physical trauma caused psychological trauma.

Crisis prevention intervention (CPI) is now a regular course, within health care facilities, due to the possibility of having to defend yourself against a patient or visitor. While we have implemented these strategies within health care facilities to help health care providers react to situations that become unsafe such as CPI, laws have not kept up with the violence that healthcare workers experience. Often staff can press charges, but those charges rarely go anywhere essentially providing a slap on the wrist for the individual. Dropping or dismissing charges doesn't holding people accountable this proves that their behavior is acceptable, and that individual will continue to engage in the same behavior because there are no consequences for their actions. I'm fortunate enough to have a Police Department on site at my facility; however, we know that the state of Kansas is mostly rural. So what happens to those nurses who are in a rural area without security or police in their hospital? I can tell you that they must wait for police to show up to their facility and in the meantime have to provide protection for themselves and other patients that could be in the hospital. Many health care facilities have taken steps to create safer environments, but without laws such as this one, essentially those facilities don't have a leg to stand on. Health care providers deserve to come to work to provide health care to their patients in a safe and effective environment. This bill will assist in providing me and my colleagues a safe space to care for your loved ones.

Respectfully,

Morgan Stebens, MSN-FN, RN, SANE-A

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