

Public Health Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-6741
AN ACT IMPROVING THE SAFETY OF HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS AND
Title: PATIENTS.
Vote Date: 3/20/2023
Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute
PH Date: 3/13/2023
File No.: 312

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

The Public Health Committee.

REASONS FOR BILL:

In Connecticut there is an ongoing effort to reduce workplace violence and to ensure a safe and secure work environment for nurses, health care workers, as well as patients and their families. This bill requires the Department of Public Health (DPH), by January 1, 2024, to provide the following:

- Develop a marketing campaign to make monthly public service announcements concerning the mistreatment of health care providers and encouraging public civility in health care settings
- Such announcements must be made on the DPH website, social media accounts and any radio and television stations broadcasting to Connecticut residents.

The bill also establishes a Hospital Security Grant Program to be administered by the Office of Policy and Management (OPM). These grants must be used to secure all areas of the hospital or for other measures that would contribute to the safety of hospital providers, staff and patients. The bill authorizes hospitals to develop policies and procedures related to safety for providers, staff and patients. These policies must govern when the hospital may require a patient receiving non-emergency care to leave the hospital if the patient's behavior would threaten the safety of others if the patient was allowed to stay.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

None expressed.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Connecticut Hospital Association, CHA:

CHA supports this bill that includes measures that will assist hospitals and other healthcare providers in their efforts to increase the safety of providers, visitors and patients. CHA also supports the development of the marketing campaign which will amplify and highlight current efforts within our hospitals to achieve the same goal. Regarding the grant program in Section 2, CHA asks that the Committee align the scope of this new OPM grant by revising the following sentence:

"Grants shall be made to hospitals to ensure the safety of health care providers, hospital staff and patients in all areas of the hospital including, but not limited to securing hospital entrances through interior and exterior physical and technological improvements."

Regarding Section 3, which allows hospitals to develop policies related to safety for individuals, CHA points out that such a measure may help hospitals to supplement existing remedies, including, but not limited to the engagement of local law enforcement authorities. Passing this bill with the modest revision suggested above will be another step toward making hospitals safer for everyone.

Elizabeth Begley, System Director Customer and Patient Relations, Hartford HealthCare:

Ms. Begley pointed out that each year nurses are subject to violence four times more than any other civilian domain, including law enforcement and corrections officers. The passage of this bill will set an expectation that incivility toward healthcare workers is unacceptable and allow healthcare organizations to establish relevant policies. The proposed grant funding will improve and enhance building security. But most important, the legislative commitment to support healthcare workers in providing care in a safe and healing environment is a public health necessity. Ms. Begley urges passage.

Amanda Oberlies, PhD, CEO, Organization of Nurse Leaders (ONL):

ONL has more than 1,100 members representing a wide range of nurse leaders in all fields of health care. While in strong support of the bill, ONL would like to note that many violent episodes in the work environment are the result of the unmet needs for more mental health and substance use treatment options and services. Improving access to these services and treatment must be a top priority of a broader discussion to prevent workplace violence. Advancing this bill is an important first step.

Kathy Flaherty, Esq, Executive Director, CT Legal Rights Project (CLRP):

Ms. Flaherty is in support of the purpose for this bill but is not convinced that a marketing campaign and public service announcements will get us to our goal. What might reduce the number of "workplace safety" incidents is reducing the number of forced psychiatric interventions. When people feel that they are not being listened to or their perspectives not valued, they sometimes exhibit behaviors that are an attempt to communicate their frustration but may represent a threat to the health and safety of others. Ms. Flaherty points out that there is a lot of violence perpetrated on people with mental health conditions in the name of "helping" them. In her testimony, Ms. Flaherty lists several existing laws that, in her opinion, allow for violence against people with mental health conditions. She suggests that if we want

to reduce violent incidences in hospitals, start figuring out how to reduce forced psychiatric intervention.

Kim Sandor, Executive Director, CT Nurses' Association (CNA):

CNA appreciates the intent of the bill but believes more needs to be done to address the issue of workplace violence. The CNA makes the following recommendations:

- Mandate annual training for all nurses on workplace violence and related behaviors.
- Annually document the employee's competence in the policy.
- Provide mentoring related to the implementations of such policies.
- Protect nurses' personal information such as home address and phone.
- Ensure clinical off-sites have adequate security.
- Mandate that funds from the grant program are awarded to security personnel that are trained in medical workplace violence.
- Expand the location of security beyond hospital entrances and public spaces.
- Mandate policies that would require nurse managers and administration to provide immediate support and alleviate patient care responsibilities to anyone impacted by violence.

CNA thanks the Committee for considering this expansion.

The following individuals submitted testimony in support of this bill:

- Kenneth Dock Fox, Emergency Department Nurse
- Daniel Freess, MD Legislative Chair and Past President CT College of Emergency Physicians
- Donna Kosiorowski, MS, RN
- Thomas MsGuire, Registered Nurse
- Kaitlin Cuas, RN
- Cheryl Wilson, President, National Association of Social Workers/ CT
- Kathleen Silard, President & CEO, Stamford Health

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

None expressed.

Reported by: Kathleen Panazza

Date: March 30,2023