



## SB 365 AN ACT CONCERNING SAFETY IN THE HEALTH CARE WORKFORCE

*HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE*

March 13, 2024

Dear Senator Lesser, Representative Gilchrest, Senator Seminara, Representative Case, and esteemed members of the Human Services Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in **support of SB 365 An Act Concerning Safety in the Health Care Workforce**

My name is Cassandra Esposito, and I am the President of the Connecticut Nurses Association. The Connecticut Nurses Association is the state constituent member of the American Nurses Association and works to represent the nurses in Connecticut across all specialty areas and practice settings.

**SB 365 Concerning Safety in the Health Care Workforce** presents a crucial opportunity to address these concerns and prioritize the safety and well-being of our healthcare workforce. As a former ER nurse, I have witnessed firsthand the challenges and risks that nurses face in their daily work. Nurses are the cornerstone of patient care, providing essential services and support to individuals and communities throughout Connecticut. However, the nature of our work exposes us to various risks, including workplace violence and hazardous situations. According to a 2019 survey by the American Nurses Association, 1 in 4 nurses reported being physically assaulted while at work. The stories of violence that nurses endure are horrifying and all too common, with tragic incidents like the murder of nurse Joyce Grayson serving as stark reminders of the dangers we face.

SB 365 addresses these issues comprehensively by:

1. **Establishing Workplace Violence Prevention Standards:** The bill mandates healthcare facilities receiving Medicaid reimbursement to adopt and implement workplace violence prevention standards in line with those of the Joint Commission. These standards require employers to manage safety and security risks, collect information to monitor the environment (including investigation of safety incidents), require staff participation in ongoing education and training, and promote leadership that maintains a culture of



safety and quality. These ultimately create processes to support a safe and supportive work environment for nurses and other healthcare professionals.

2. **Promoting Safety Training for Home Healthcare Workers:** Recognizing the unique challenges faced by home healthcare workers, SB 365 requires agencies providing such services to implement health and safety training endorsed by reputable organizations like the CDC and OSHA. This training is crucial for equipping nurses with the skills needed to navigate potential hazards in home care settings.
3. **Incentivizing Timely Reporting of Workplace Violence Incidents:** By offering rate enhancements under the Medicaid program for healthcare facilities and home healthcare agencies that promptly report workplace violence incidents, SB 365 encourages transparency and accountability. Timely reporting is vital for ensuring swift intervention and support for affected nurses and healthcare workers to address the current issues and implement actions to prevent future ones.
4. **Funding for Escorts:** It is critical to balance the healthcare needs of patients in all settings with the safety of the healthcare workforce providing those services. SB 365 provides critical funding for escorts. The presence of an escort will ensure the safety of the nurse/healthcare provider. This will create an environment where the nurse can safely provide the full scope of her services.

As the President of the Connecticut Nurses Association, I urge you to support SB 365 and take decisive action to prioritize the safety and well-being of our healthcare workforce. Workplace violence prevention is not only crucial for protecting nurses and healthcare workers from harm but also for strengthening our workforce by fostering a culture of safety. By implementing comprehensive safety standards, promoting training initiatives, and incentivizing incident reporting, SB 365 will create a safer and more supportive work environment for nurses and other healthcare professionals across our state.

Thank you for your attention to this critical matter. Should you have any questions or require further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Cassandra Esposito, MSN, APRN, NP-C  
President  
Connecticut Nurses Association